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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In annex III of its resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998, the Economic and Social Council recognized the dual role of the regional commissions as the outposts of the United Nations and the regional expression of the Organization, and gave guidance on measures to be undertaken with respect to this dual role. The present report updates the Council on actions undertaken by the regional commissions during the period under review with respect to the guidance given. A review of the regional commissions' cooperation with other non-United Nations regional bodies is contained in addendum 1 to the present report (E/2000/10/Add.1); a review of selected activities implemented during the period between the Council's substantive sessions of 1999 and 2000 is contained in addendum 2 (E/2000/10/Add 2); and the resolutions and decisions adopted by the regional commissions during the period under review that require action by the Council or are brought to its attention are contained in addendum 3 (E/2000/10/Add.3). In addition, in accordance with Council decision 2000/207 of 4 February 2000, the report reviews in section III the theme for regional cooperation which is "Follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: exchange of regional experiences". Finally, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Council resolution 1817 (LV), the report of the Executive Secretaries is contained in section V of the report.

The summaries of the economic surveys of the five regions have been made available to the Economic and Social Council. The annual reports of the regional commissions contain further background information on the issues addressed in the report and its addenda. They are issued as supplements to the *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*.

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Introduction

1. In its resolution 1998/46, annex III, the Economic and Social Council underscored the dual role of the regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations and the regional expression of the Organization in which they form a part in the institutional landscapes of their respective regions. The overall guidance of the Council with respect to this dual role emphasized the need to link to activities of the commissions more effectively with the overall activities of the Organization in the economic and social fields. It also encouraged close cooperation between the commissions and other regional bodies in order to reinforce collective action on the basis of complementarities and core strengths of their respective programmes of work. The regional commissions have acted decisively thereafter, and the period under review reflects the substantial steps taken in this regard.

2. On the regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations, the report reviews under section I positive developments in linking the activities of the commissions more effectively with the overall activities of the Organization, covering, in particular, the commissions' involvement in the activities of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and their cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Also under section I, the report reviews the role of the commissions as the regional expression of the United Nations and their involvement in and contribution to global events and debates. Due consideration is also given to regional coordination meetings that the Council called for in order to ensure that work of the United Nations system is coordinated at the regional level. Cooperation with regional bodies outside the United Nations system is highlighted in addendum 1 to the present report (E/2000/10/Add.1).

3. Activities of the commissions, in the context of trends and the most recent and relevant economic events, are reviewed briefly under section II and more in detail in Addendum 2 to the report (E/2000/10/Add.2). Section III on interregional cooperation reviews follow-up action to the world conferences of the 1990s from a regional perspective. It also reviews the intensified cooperation among the commissions. Section IV updates the Council on recent measures undertaken by the commissions for furthering their effectiveness and efficiency. Section V contains the report of the Executive Secretaries which includes a summary update of their views on the new international financial architecture. It also includes their views on globalization, regionalism and development. The Executive Secretaries also include in their report proposals for strengthening policy dialogue at the global level between the Council and the regional commissions. Resolutions and decisions emanating from sessions of the commissions, held during the period under review, that require action by the Council or are brought to its attention, are contained in addendum 3 to the report (E/2000/10/Add.3).

I. Recent developments, including follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46

4. In its guidance on the role of the commissions as outposts of the United Nations, the Economic and Social Council called for their active participation in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and UNDG meetings and their work. It also called for their active cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD and UNDP, natural partners in the economic and social sectors. With respect to the role of the commissions as part of their respective regional landscapes, the Council's mandate included the holding of regional coordination meetings under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General, for improved coordination of the activities of the United Nations system at the regional level; and improved cooperation with other regional bodies in their respective regions, which is reviewed in addendum 1 (E/2000/10/Add.1).

A. The regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations

1. Participation in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG)

5. The Executive Secretaries of the regional commission have actively participated in the meetings

and activities of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and for that purpose have scheduled, to the extent possible, the meetings of the Executive Secretaries in conjunction with the meeting of the committee. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), who headed a task force of the Executive Committee that prepared the paper entitled "Towards a new international financial architecture" (January 1999), as a collective response of the Executive Committee to the recent international financial crisis, has been entrusted, during the period under review, by the Convenor of the Executive Committee, with its update. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC is also a member of the Task Force that is overseeing the finalization of the Executive Committee's paper on the social dimensions of macroeconomic policy. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1999/14) submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 1999, the commissions submitted to the Executive Committee in 1999 a project proposal on an interregional comparative study on social safety net programmes, to be executed by the five commissions under the coordination of ECLAC. The project, which will produce five regional papers and an interregional overview on the experience gained in the implementation of safety net programmes, will be submitted for funding under the Development Account for the period 2002-2003.

6. The regional commissions continued to participate in the meetings of UNDG and its Executive Committee. Their participation ensures a flow of mutually useful information and helps develop an appreciation of each other's work, priorities and capacities. In substantive terms, following the guidance contained in paragraph 41 of General Assembly resolution 53/192 of 15 December 1998, participation of the regional commissions in the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) has been the main focus of attention of their involvement with the work programme and activities of UNDG.

7. As also reported by the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 (E/1999/14, paras. 45-49), the regional commissions were fully involved in the preparation of the guidelines for CCA and UNDAF. In respect of the actual implementation of these guidelines, the involvement of the regional commissions in CCA and UNDAF has been limited, as is evident from a review recently undertaken by the Development Group Office (DGO/UNDG) of the UNDAF pilot phase.

8. Clearly more efforts are needed, both by the regional commissions and by the resident coordinators at the country level, with the support and encouragement of UNDG, to secure greater involvement of the regional commissions for incorporating regional and subregional dimensions in CCA and UNDAF. In response to these needs, the regional commissions, with the support and cooperation of DGO/UNDG, are working to organize CCA/UNDAF workshops at the seats of their respective secretariats. The first two were held by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva on 29 March 2000 and by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on 5 May 2000. The workshops for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ECLAC and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will be held in the coming months.

2. Cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

9. The regional commissions worked particularly closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD during the period under review. They continue their cooperation within the context of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and their usual participation in Project LINK (an international collaborative research group for econometric modelling, coordinated jointly by the Development Policy Analysis Division of the United Nations Secretariat, and the University of Toronto), in the area of research and policy analyses and in monitoring and analyses of emerging global and regional trends and macroeconomic policies for their respective flagship publications, namely the *World Economic Survey* and the regional economic and social surveys. In addition, they have recently begun intensive collaboration in the two areas of information and communication technology for development and financing for development, as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is in charge of the preparations for intergovernmental reviews of the two issues at the global level and the commissions are

holding regional meetings and other activities whose outcome and results are to input into the debate at the global level.

10. The regional commissions are also participating closely with UNCTAD in those two emerging areas. The Executive Secretaries and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD will hold an interactive debate on 7 July 2000 in connection with the review of the Council of the subject at its High-level Segment. The regional commissions and UNCTAD are also expected to cooperate closely with respect to the regional meetings being organized by the regional commissions on financing for development. At the tenth session of UNCTAD, at the invitation of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Executive Secretaries of the five regional commissions participated in an interactive debate with him on globalization, regionalization and development. The five papers presented by the Executive Secretaries will be published by UNCTAD.

(a) Cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

11. ECE is working closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, devoted to energy. It has participated regularly in the Inter-Agency Task Force on preparations for the ninth session of the Commission, convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, providing a variety of inputs, including ECE documents relating to sustainable energy development; an updated matrix of ECE activities in the field of sustainable energy; and the regional key issues as approved by the ECE Intergovernmental Task Force on Contributions to the Commission at its ninth session. ECE is preparing case studies on these issues for the consideration of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development established in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission. In addition, at the request of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the ECE Committee on Sustainable Energy considered, at its session in November 1999, the draft World Energy Assessment to be submitted to the Commission at its ninth session.

12. Close cooperation is ongoing between the statistical division of ECE and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (see E/1999/14, para. 13). In addition, new areas of cooperation include ECE's initiative on statistics and indicators for social process (a contribution to the preparation of the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development) and the preparation of a review of the statistical activities carried out as a follow-up to the Summit.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

13. ESCAP has continued its cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs through regular exchange of research findings and information on the emerging opportunities created and challenges posed developments in the global economic environment for developing countries of the ESCAP region. The *World Economic and Social Survey, 1999*[1] and *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 1999*[2] issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ESCAP respectively contributed to the international debate on the causes of the financial and economic crisis in Asia, the impact on the global and regional economies, and the prospects for recovery and various policy measures, international and regional, that could help avert future crisis.

14. ESCAP continues to participate in and contribute to the deliberations of the Committee for Development Policy serviced by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. A follow-up activity to the high-level seminar on managing capital flows: national and international dimensions, jointly organized by ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Bangkok in 1998, in which the Department of Economic and Social Affairs took part, is planned for implementation during the current biennium.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

15. ECLAC has continued its ongoing collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the monitoring of major trends and events of the world economy, through the provision of statistical data and analyses on the regional economy. Collaboration has been particularly intense in the area of population, in which, besides the regular updating of population estimates, ECLAC staff taught two modules in the training workshop for trainers on civil

registration and vital statistics systems organized by the United Nations Statistics Division and ESCAP (Bangkok, 1999). In addition to this, ECLAC has been fully incorporated into the Inter-Agency Task Force on preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

16. During the past year, ECA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs collaborated on a range of policy issues relating to governance, public administration, the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s,[3] and youth matters. ECA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are cooperating in the implementation of the plan of action of the United Nations Public Administrative Management (UNPAM) programme which aims to develop an Internet-linked network of institutions, Governments and other organizations with information and knowledge on critical aspects of public sector policies and management. The core thematic areas are public policies governance systems and institutions; civil service/public sector reform; and management innovation and development and public finance. ECA is one of the regional centres whose main function will be to serve as regional information clearing houses; regional on-line training programme developers; and regional on-line conference organizers.

17. ECA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized an African Youth Forum for the United Nations System on the theme "Empowering African Youth for Action" in April 2000 in Addis Ababa, as a follow-up to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth held in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1998.

18. ECA and the Office of the Special Coordinator on Africa and the Least Developed Countries (OSCAL) are working together to assist in the process for undertaking the independent evaluation of the United Nations-New Agenda for the Development of Africa, in preparation for the final review and appraisal of that programme. Both collaborated closely in preparing inputs to the follow-up report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development on Africa (A/54/133-E/1999/79) submitted to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

19. Cooperation between ESCWA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs revolved around macroeconomic policies, statistics, energy, sustainable development, social issues relating to follow-up to global conferences, the disabled, youth and the family and information technology. In the area of energy, ESCWA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs cooperated in holding a regional consultative meeting on world energy assessment (Beirut, November 1999). ESCWA also participated in the United Nations International Roundtable for Transportation, energy efficiency and sustainable development (Cairo, December 1999).

20. Cooperation is also ongoing between the two organizations on issues pertaining to the disabled, regional demographic estimates and projections and workshops and meetings concerning various statistical areas such as gender statistics in the Arab world, vital statistics and civil registration systems, and the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA).[4]

21. ESCWA also provided inputs on the dissemination of success stories relating to renewable energy resources in the region for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to be held in April 2001. ESCWA will also provide a general review of progress made at the regional level on follow-up to Agenda 21[5] for the regional consultative meeting on sustainable development to be convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Beirut, October 2000). Furthermore, the interregional advisers of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the areas of energy and water will be involved in the coordination of regional activities with their ESCWA counterparts.

22. ESCWA, like all other regional commissions, is a member of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections, demographic estimates and projections being an area where regular consultations are held between the two organizations regarding regional data on the subject. ESCWA is producing benchmark data for the region as an input into the Department of Economic and Social Affairs "United Nations World Estimates and Projections". Both are also cooperating in preparing the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS), which is to be developed

into a comprehensive statistical system for the Arab countries.

(b) Cooperation with UNCTAD

ECE

23. Cooperation with UNCTAD in the field of economic analysis is well established. For the preparation of its Trade and Development Report report, UNCTAD draws on data and analyses provided by ECE for the economies of the region. Starting in 1999, ECE has undertaken to supply UNCTAD with a text on developments in the transition economies of Eastern Europe, the Baltic region and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for inclusion in the Trade and Development Report. Conversely, ECE relies on UNCTAD for data concerning the global context for the ECE economies.

24. In the area of transport, cooperation with UNCTAD has been strengthening with respect to landlocked and transit developing countries and ECE has offered to cooperate with UNCTAD in assisting these countries in adopting the internationally agreed ECE transport norms and regulations with a view to lowering their transport and transit costs and improving transport safety and environmental protection.

25. ECE has also strengthened its working relationship with UNCTAD in the area of trade facilitation. UNCTAD actively participates in the development of trade facilitation recommendations through the International Trade Procedures Working Group hosted by ECE's trade facilitation body, United Nations/CEFACT (United Nations Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport), and has taken an active part in the annual CEFACT conference, presenting its technical assistance work in support of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. ECE and UNCTAD have also jointly participated in several workshops and seminars explaining the role of ECE in developing recommendations and of UNCTAD in providing technical assistance. In this connection, UNCTAD actively participates in ECE's work to develop trade facilitation recommendations. A jointly developed recommendation on the establishment of national trade facilitation bodies was approved in 1999 by United Nations/CEFACT, and a joint document containing guidelines to create an efficient environment for trade and transport has been recently published.

ESCAP

26. Cooperation with UNCTAD included the following: (a) an expert group meeting held in February 2000 with the participation of UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre (ITC) to develop a regional information infrastructure on trade and investment. The meeting identified some mechanisms and modalities for developing the regional information infrastructure; (b) a senior officials meeting organized in August 1999 in collaboration with UNCTAD and the Asian Development Bank in August 1999 to prepare developing countries for the Third World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference; (c) in conjunction with the tenth session of UNCTAD, ESCAP participated in a Symposium on Economic and Financial Recovery in Asia and is participating in the UNCTAD Conference on Debt Management; (d) ESCAP is collaborating with UNCTAD to develop a pilot training programme to assist ESCAP members in increasing their capacity in trade and investment promotion by supporting and encouraging the sharing of resources and expertise between trade-related training institutes in Asia; (e) in consultation with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries of UNCTAD, and as part of the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s[6] preparatory to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, ESCAP commissioned three subregional studies (South Asia, South-East Asia and Pacific) focusing on four priority areas, namely, finance for development, social issues, external trade performance and economic infrastructure. On the basis of these subregional studies, a synthesis paper will be prepared and presented as the main substantive document to a regional Expert Group Meeting and to the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries.

ECLAC

27. Cooperation between ECLAC and UNCTAD included: (a) a joint project involving individual country case-studies of private sector interests in international and regional negotiations, mechanisms for diffusing information from the public to the private

sector, and mechanisms for making up the negotiating agenda; (b) the "Regional meeting on international trade research and training needs in Latin America and the Caribbean", which took place in Santiago, Chile, on 4 and 5 November 1999, organized by ECLAC in cooperation with UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Subsequently, the "First continental meeting of Programme on Training Development in the Field of Maritime Transport (TRAINMAR)", was jointly organized by ECLAC and UNCTAD (Santiago, Chile, 1-3 December 1999); and (c) ECLAC presentation on the situation of landlocked countries in Latin America and the Caribbean at the Meeting of Governmental Experts from Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Representatives of Donor Countries and Financial and Development Institutions, organized by UNCTAD (New York, 24-26 August 1999). ECLAC also presented a study on the topic "Multilateral negotiations from a regional perspective" at the International workshop "Developing a positive Venezuelan agenda for the Millennium Round", organized by UNCTAD and the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry (Caracas, 9-11 August 1999).

28. In addition to the above, ECLAC and UNCTAD have continued their exchanges of experiences and information on trade and efficiency, such as transport facilitation, electronic data interchange (EDI) in transport and the development of trade efficiency assessment measures. Both institutions continued assisting Central American countries and regional organizations like the Central American Commission for Maritime Transport (COCATRAM) (maritime transport) and the Permanent Secretariat of the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) (economic integration) in the development of multimodal transport projects and seminars. Regional research on industrial structuring and international competitiveness in Latin America, Asia and Africa, undertaken in cooperation with UNCTAD, was concluded, and the final report is being published by UNCTAD under the title "Coping with globalization: transnational, industrial restructuring and competitiveness in developing countries".

ECA

29. In response to General Assembly resolution 54/235 concerning the preparation for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in 2001, ECA and UNCTAD have collaborated in organizing two subregional preparatory meetings for francophone and anglophone African countries. The first preparatory meeting, for English-speaking African countries, was held at ECA from 27 to 29 March 2000. The second preparatory meeting, for the French-speaking African countries, was held from 18 to 20 April 2000 in Niamey, the Niger. Both organizations intend to hold a special event to raise the awareness of African policy makers about the importance of the upcoming conference, to be held in conjunction with the joint meeting of African Ministers of Trade and Finance scheduled for 20-22 November 2000.

30. Both organizations have been working together to support and encourage e-commerce development in Africa and jointly organized a regional workshop in Nairobi in 1999. ECA has also exchanged views with UNCTAD on issues pertaining to the creation of science and technology policy for African countries and both have agreed to develop further exchange of ideas and information.

ESCWA

31. ESCWA's long-standing cooperation with UNCTAD became official through the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations in 1997. In 1999, cooperation between the two organizations involved substantive inputs of UNCTAD into two ESCWA expert group meetings on trade and environment and trade efficiency. In addition, cooperation involves activities in e-commerce, foreign direct investment (FDI) and World Trade Organization-related issues which include participation in expert group meetings, joint preparation of regional training and inputs into selected components of ESCWA's work in these areas. It would also involve training and advisory services pertaining to understanding the implications of the World Trade Organizations by various sectors and assistance in accession thereto for ESCWA countries that require such assistance. Special attention will be given to assisting member States in negotiations pertaining to the fields of agriculture and trade in services. Furthermore, an ESCWA/UNCTAD project on training and human resource development in the field of foreign trade programme (TRAINFORTRADE) for the ESCWA region, in Arabic, is currently under consideration. ESCWA is

also involved in launching UNCTAD's World Investment Report in the ESCWA region.

3. Cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

32. The regional commissions provided their programme budgets for the biennium 2000-2001 as well as their draft medium-term plans for the period 2002-2005 to the Bureaux of UNDP through the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the regional coordination meetings.

ECE

33. In the course of 1999, ECE carried out a number of projects funded by UNDP in the areas of energy and statistics. Cooperation with UNDP continued in the extension of the project on energy efficiency demonstration zones for which the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an important source of funding. ECE also assisted in the preparatory phase of several GEF/UNDP projects relating to energy efficiency and greenhouse gas mitigation strategies. In statistics, the project on a pilot census in Armenia was completed in December 1999. Despite its financial difficulties, UNDP has approved funding for the year 2000 for the continuation of the project on human development statistics and social trends reporting in Eastern and Central Europe and CIS. A new trade-related project on the promotion of national capacities for international development cooperation has also been approved for UNDP funding in 2000.

34. In addition, UNDP was among the four partner organizations that collaborated with ECE in the organization of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 2000 Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held in Geneva in January 2000. The Regional Bureau for Central and Eastern Europe and CIS contributed a paper on national mechanisms to the Meeting and representatives of UNDP were part of the secretariat support staff for the finalization of the agreed conclusions of the Meeting. Together with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) UNDP also provided financial support enabling the participation of a large number of non-governmental organizations from ECE countries with economies in transition to be present. Preceding the ECE meeting, a half-day UNDP panel was organized on the contribution of women to the economies in transition that gathered representatives from countries of Central and Eastern Europe and CIS.

ESCAP

35. For the duration of the first Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific (1997-2001), UNDP has approved five regional/subregional projects for implementation by ESCAP. They cover the areas of strengthening national capacities in statistics, promotion of women in small business and gender equality.

36. The UNDP offices in the region have also approved several national projects for implementation by ESCAP.

37. Although overall extrabudgetary cash contribution towards ESCAP's technical cooperation activities decreased only slightly in 1999, UNDP's allocation of resources from its intercountry programme resources for regional projects decreased by 53.7 per cent, from US$ 662,770.00 for six regional/subregional projects in 1998 to US$ 307,095.00 for three regional/subregional projects in 1999. ESCAP's cooperation with UNDP in the execution of country projects financed from the support for policy and programme component of UNDP's resources amounted to approximately US$ 1,190,920.00.

ECLAC

38. The collaboration with UNDP has continued along two main lines, supporting the socio-economic aspects of governance in the region and the delivery of technical assistance at the national level, including the assessment of the impact of natural disasters.

39. As part of the 20/20 initiative approved at the World Summit for Social Development, and with funds from the Government of Norway, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ECLAC carried out a joint study in 13 countries from the region on public spending on basic social services. The conclusions of the project were published in the form of a book in October 1999.

40. In follow-up to a joint UNDP/ECLAC/Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project on macroeconomic policy and poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, concluded in 1998 with UNDP funds, ECLAC has continued research on the effects of

macroeconomic policies on employment and income distribution. ECLAC is acting as a cooperating agency in several UNDP country projects. Most of these projects are aimed at supporting national efforts for eradicating poverty and improving macroeconomic management and policy coordination, particularly in terms of employment generation, investment promotion and sustainable environmental management. Currently ECLAC has a portfolio of 21 UNDP-funded projects under execution, amounting to US$ 1.48 million for regional projects and US$ 1.38 million for country projects.

ECA

41. ECA and UNDP have worked closely together on a range of issues during the past year. ECA has been a member of the steering committee on the UNDP African Internet initiative and has worked closely with UNDP in the implementation of this project. ECA has also worked very closely with the UNDP Sustainable Development Networking Programme in Africa. UNDP is a member of the Partnership for Information and Commission Technologies in Africa (PICTA), which brings together multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organizations as well as the private sector, all working together to implement the African Information Society Initiative — the framework for building information and communication technologies in Africa. UNDP and UNIFEM provided funds to ECA for the purpose of organizing the subregional follow-up meetings on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held in various locations in Africa as well as the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women held in November 1999 in Addis Ababa.

42. UNDP's Peace for Development Unit in Addis Ababa has worked closely with ECA in the launching of ECA's Mano River Basin Initiative aimed at addressing the subregional dimension of post-conflict reconstruction and development in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. ECA and UNDP are collaborating in organizing the fourth African Governance Forum (AGF IV) which will be held in Kampala, Uganda, in the second half of the year. The theme of AGF IV is the role of the parliamentary system in governance. Moreover, UNDP continued to provide funding for the project on the establishment of the African Economic Community, under implementation in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

ESCWA

43. In 1999, cooperation with UNDP mainly focused on environmental and social issues, namely, national programmes for promoting sustainable development at the institutional level and an environmental strategy and action plan; the promotion of sustainable human development at the national level; the promotion of gender statistics for the Arab countries; a poverty eradication programme for Yemen; and integrated follow-up to global conferences in the area of social development at the regional level, a three-year project launched in 1998. UNDP contributed about US$ 1,355,000 towards the implementation of activities in these areas. The flagship project on integrated regional follow-up by the Arab States to United Nations global conferences, financed by UNDP and executed by ESCWA, is one of the landmarks of cooperation between ESCWA and UNDP. The project cooperation involves other United Nations agencies, namely, UNICEF, UNIFEM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Some of the major accomplishments of this project in 1999 consisted of round-table discussions on civil society partnership in follow-up to global conferences and the creation of a web site on the Intranet and Internet on the project, and the establishment of a Steering Committee for the project that involves various actors including inter-agency, governmental and non-governmental partners.

44. ESCWA and UNDP cooperation in the area of gender statistics comprises another landmark exemplified by the holding of an expert group meeting on the implications of the United Nations conferences for social statistics which marked the beginning of regional efforts to underscore the significance of social statistics, a workshop for national producers and users of gender statistics in seven Arab countries and a regional workshop on gender statistics which facilitated exchange of experiences and good practices in this area. It also resulted in the publication of a statistical portrait of men and women in the Arab region. ESCWA, with the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO), is also providing assistance to the UNDP/Jordan office in formulating a two-year technical assistance project aimed at building training capacity for microenterprises and small enterprises and in preparing the requisite training material.

45. UNDP's contributions to ongoing projects in the year 2000 are estimated at US$ 947,000 which will

also cover the same areas mentioned above, excluding those relating to human development, which were concluded in 1999.

B. The regional commissions as the regional expression of the United Nations

46. Because of their dual role, the regional commissions are able to bring global concerns to their respective regions, and regional perspectives to global debates. This is well illustrated by recent significant debates and initiatives of the commissions as well as by regional meetings organized in response to global events.

1. Significant substantive issues

ECE

47. At the 1999 annual session of the Commission, the economic debate focused on the recovery in south-eastern Europe after the conflict in Kosovo. Since that session, a number of related follow-up activities have been undertaken.

48. In the area of policy and analysis, the 1999 issue of the *Economic Survey of Europe, No. 1*,[7] included a now widely quoted and disseminated study on "Postwar Reconstruction and Development in South-East Europe".[8]

49. The Conference of European Statisticians discussed the role of statistics in the programme for recovery and reconstruction of South-Eastern Europe after the conflict in Kosovo. A task force was set up for promoting and coordinating initiatives with the participation of the major international agencies involved in the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe), in particular the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) among others.

50. In the context of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), a number of projects were initiated to assist countries in the region in rehabilitating and interconnecting their electric power systems in order to enhance electricity trade and exchanges. Efforts were also undertaken to ensure that gas continued to flow through Yugoslavia to meet the winter needs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

51. The Committee on Human Settlements decided to focus its assistance to the reconstruction in South-East Europe on issues of land administration. Within the framework of the Working Party on Land Administration, ECE organized a mission on the re-establishment of cadastre in Kosovo.

52. ECE is actively involved in the Working Table II of the EU Stability Pact where ECE has presented a number of projects for south-east Europe, most of which are being implemented jointly with SECI.

ESCAP

53. Within its broad mandate of strengthening regional and subregional economic cooperation for promoting trade, investment and technology linkages and accelerating industrial development, ESCAP has been making efforts to assist the region's developing countries in integrating into the international economic environment on a more equitable basis. In recognition of the primacy of the rules, principles and concepts on which the global trading system is built, ESCAP accords high priority to the effective and active participation of developing countries in the future World Trade Organization negotiating agenda.

54. The Commission, at its fifty-sixth session, debated the theme topic of "Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition in the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis". Discussions on the topic were of special importance in the wake of the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference and the tenth session of UNCTAD. A related issue discussed at the session was on possible regional mechanisms for the exchange of information and early warning systems in relation to the financial and economic situation in the countries of the region, as well as recommendations for future action in pursuance of Commission resolution 55/2[9] on "Economic and financial monitoring and surveillance in the ESCAP region".

ECLAC

55. ECLAC provided to its recent twenty-eighth session in Mexico, a report entitled "Equity, Development and Citizenship" (LC/G.2071

(SES.28/3)) which reflects ECLAC's views on the integrated nature of development. The report proposes that development entails more than simply the complementarity of social, economic, environmental and democratic governance policies. It should also include human capital, social well-being, sustainable development and citizenship. In other words, an integrated development process should include people's welfare and the sustainability of habitat in addition to economic growth. Progress and growth should translate into an increasingly and more comprehensive satisfaction of existing needs. Development should not only be aimed at fulfilling people's growing aspirations in terms of consumption, however legitimate they may be, but also fulfil people's aspirations for a better quality of life. In addition, it should also seek to create a social and human climate of security and mutual trust to consolidate a democratic political system that provides for greater participation by the public in government management and decision-making. It should seek to enhance the well-being of those who have least access to benefits; to give rise to collective undertakings in which citizenry has a greater responsibility and sense of belonging; and to protect and improve the national habitat of those who dwell in it today and those who will do so tomorrow.

56. The Mexico resolution on equity, development and citizenship welcomed the above report, in that it reinforced the idea that development was an integrated process, and requested the secretariat to distribute the document widely and to encourage its consideration by the international organizations concerned. It urged the secretariat to continue to deepen its analysis in several of the issues it covered in the document, namely, social and macroeconomic policies; reinforcement of the concept of citizenship; the interrelationship between development agendas of countries and of the region and policies associated with the globalization process; and the construction of a stable predictable international financial system and its linkage with social development.

ECA

57. ECA has launched an initiative to address the subregional dimension of post-conflict reconstruction and development in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Each of these three countries is either emerging from the ravages of war or has been adversely affected by conflicts in the neighbouring countries. Known as the Mano River Basin Initiative, after the river that traverses the three countries and around which they have formed a subregional economic grouping, its aim is to assist the process of post-conflict peace-building within and among the three countries by focusing on development activities that are subregional in nature. The partners collaborating with ECA in implementing the initiative include United Nations agencies and African regional and subregional organizations, namely, the African Development Bank, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), UNDP, the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Bank.

58. The first consultative meeting of the partners of the Mano River Basin Initiative was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in October 1999, and the second consultative meeting was held on 23 and 24 March 2000, in Conakry, Guinea. The organizations collaborating on this initiative have now begun the process of identifying projects of a subregional nature that would help post-conflict peace-building in the three countries.

59. In addition to post-conflict reconstruction, the Commission has been seized of other central challenges for Africa. The main issues considered by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry (CAMI) (22 and 23 October 1999, Dakar, Senegal), included the strategy for revitalizing private sector development in Africa and the impact of globalization on industrial development in Africa.

60. It was indicated that the Conference on industrial partnerships and investment in Africa focused on such issues as forging partnerships for Africa's industrial development project financing; privatization and industrial partnerships in Africa; financing of small and medium-scale enterprises in Africa; regional economic integration and investment promotion; private financing of infrastructure; and the need for Africa to adopt new approaches and mechanisms for fostering industrialization in Africa. CAMI adopted a common African position on globalization in which it invited African countries, *inter alia*, to support and reinforce current trade negotiations with a view to ensuring a favourable environment for development of African

industry; solicit international support for establishing conditions for successful industrialization in terms of infrastructure and services and enhancing political stability; promote strong industrial growth in order to reverse Africa's marginalization in the context of globalization; enhance competitiveness through stimulating macroeconomic growth, improved infrastructure, reduced transaction costs, better industrial governance, and promoting technological upgrading; strengthen human capital; create an enabling environment for private sector development; and facilitate foreign direct investment (FDI).

61. The first meeting of the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society (21-23 June 1999, Addis Ababa), considered the theme of popular participation for sustainable social and human development in Africa and examined issues such as capacity-building of indigenous African civil society organizations: the establishment of the African Centre for Civil Society; and the promotion of public/private partnership for enhanced and sustained economic, social and human development in Africa.

62. The first meeting of the Committee on Development Information (28 June-2 July 1999) considered harnessing information for development. Under that overall theme, the following sub-themes were addressed: African statistical development: a review and the road ahead in the new millennium; the economic and social benefits to be derived from the use of geographical information technologies; and key issues for development and dissemination in Africa. The meeting put forward a number of recommendations to enhance the contributions of these three areas to the socio-economic development of Africa.

63. The meeting of the Committee on Natural Resources and Science and Technology (15-18 November 1999, Addis Ababa), proposed a number of recommendations for strengthening the science and technology capacity of African countries. These related to the global strategy for building science and technology capacities and sustainable development; linking research findings to industries; and strengthening the role of national and regional institutions in promoting the application of science and technology for management of natural resources.

64. The second session of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning (4-5 May 2000, Abuja, Nigeria) considered the medium-term 2002-2005 for ECA; a paper on overview and plans for assessing regional integration in Africa; and the mid-decade review of the World Summit for Social Development: the African experience.

ESCWA

65. In connection with its twenty-fifth anniversary and the adoption of resolution 220 (XX) of 27 May 1999[10] on the adoption of the Beirut Declaration,[11] at its session in 1999, ESCWA has been seized of elaborating a new vision that defines its role and tasks in line with regional and world developments in the coming century. It convened two meetings to translate the contents of the Declaration into concrete regional priorities that would be arrived at collectively by the United Nations system, Governments and civil society actors as a testimony of partnership reflecting the real concerns of the society at large.

66. The first meeting was held in December 1999 to discuss the role of ESCWA in regional development at the doorsteps of the twenty-first century. The discussions revolved around two studies that had been prepared by ESCWA on the occasion of the celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary in May 1999. The first study was entitled "ESCWA (1974-1999): Twenty-five years of service to the region's development"; the second "The ESCWA region: twenty-five years". This meeting aimed at examining the past for the purpose of formulating concrete recommendations for the future in the light thereof. The meeting involved experts from the Arab region whose discussions revolved around the three main themes addressed by the second study, namely, peace and security, economic and social development and institutions (democracy and human rights). The second meeting was a brainstorming session among eminent persons, held in February 2000 under the title "Promoting the role of ESCWA at the door steps of the twenty-first century". The meetings involved a number of Arab thinkers from intellectual and civil society circles in an attempt to involve all actors of society.

67. The main areas of concern identified during the second meeting included the significance of the development of natural resources and indivisibility of environmental, energy and water concerns; the importance of culture in development and the necessity

of surmounting cultural impediments and of addressing cultural specificities to promote development; the need to accord institution-building special importance, especially in terms of creating an infrastructure for promoting, *inter alia*, democracy and human rights, a sound educational system, fiscal system, good governance and civil society institutions and a sound judicial system; and the need to address regional positions vis-à-vis globalization.

68. ESCWA's effort towards involving high-level non-governmental actors in identifying more specific regional priorities and major areas of concern, within the umbrella of the Beirut Declaration, is undertaken with a view to raising their recommendations at subsequent intergovernmental meetings and reaching a consensus on issues identified.

2. Regional meetings on follow-up to world conferences

69. In view of the decision of the Economic and Social Council to adopt as its theme topic for the agenda item on regional cooperation "Follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: exchange of regional experiences", a narrative on this is included under section III of this report.

3. Regional hearings in preparation for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations

70. In preparation for the Millennium Assembly and the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, and at the request of the Secretary-General, the regional commissions convened five regional hearings. All the hearings brought together representatives of the member States, civil society, academics and non-governmental organizations to advance the regional perspectives on how the United Nations could best promote its Charter objectives in the new millennium. With the exception of the hearing for the ESCAP region, all of them took place during 1999 at the respective locations of the commission secretariats. The ESCAP hearing was hosted by Japan in Tokyo on 9 and 10 September 1999. The hearings for the other regions were held as follows: ECE region, 7 and 8 July; ECLAC region, 1 and 2 September; ECA region, 24 and 25 June; and ESCWA region, 23 and 24 May. Results of the ESCWA hearing were reported in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1999/14, para. 51). (Results of the hearings are available in A/54/754, A/54/281, A/54/280, A/54/503 and A/54/718.)

71. The hearings were conducted on the basis of selected themes relating to the role of the United Nations in the new millennium. While the hearings brought out regional priorities and preferences, there was broad commonality of views and shared conclusions on a number of issues. Challenges of peace, security, development, human rights and good governance were interlinked. The threats to peace and to social and political instability were often rooted in conditions of unemployment and underemployment, poverty, inequality and poor governance. Human rights and good governance were critical requirements of our time. As human rights were indivisible, the promotion of civil and political rights should be carried out in tandem with the promotion of the right to development, including equitable access to health, education and other social services. Human rights could not flourish in the absence of economic and social development, democratic institutions and good governance. Poverty should be regarded as a gross violation of human rights and countries should be encouraged to set time-bound targets for its elimination. Economic development was increasingly driven by knowledge and the ability to organize people around constantly changing tasks, for which a climate of freedom was a precondition. It was pointed out that the enormous and growing disparities between rich and poor nations were undermining the sustainability of development, giving way on the one hand to a phenomenon of overpopulation, and on the other to a phenomenon of overconsumption, both at the expense of all humankind.

72. The regional hearings reaffirmed the role and relevance of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. They also called for greater involvement of the regional organizations in various tasks, especially in matters of peace and security. The United Nations should also strengthen its partnership with other emerging actors in conflict resolution and development, in particular the civil society institutions and the non-governmental organizations.

4. Regional meetings on information technology for development

73. The regional commissions organized regional meetings and consultations on information technology for development between October 1999 and June 2000. All provided brief reports to the current session of the Economic and Social Council on the outcome of their respective meetings/consultations in order to integrate

the regional dimension into the debate of its high-level segment on the theme "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based economy". The regional areas of concern are discussed below.

ECE

74. In its effort to integrate the regional dimension of development in the deliberations on information technology and development during the high-level segment of the forthcoming substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, the ECE secretariat has prepared a substantive background paper on "Information technology, globalization and development". The paper addresses the relationships between information and communication technology (ICT) and key issues such as globalization, economic growth, income distribution, and economic and social risks. It also identifies challenges and opportunities related to ICT as well as directions for action aimed at increasing the capacity of economies in transition to have access to ICT and to use it for accelerating their development.

75. The paper will be circulated at the ECE conference on "Technology transfer for economic development: experiences for countries in transition", to be organized in Zagreb in June 2000, jointly with the Ministry of Science and Technology of Croatia. The ECE member States agreed to provide comments on the paper, to be incorporated by the secretariat. The paper will be finalized at a meeting to be held in early June in which both representatives of ECE member States in Geneva and experts from capitals will be invited to participate. This document will constitute the ECE contribution to the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on the matter.

ESCAP

76. ESCAP in cooperation with the Government of India held a regional meeting on information technology (IT) and development in May 2000.

77. The Asian and Pacific region registered the fastest growth averaging 15 per cent in the 1990s in spending in ICT. Considerable progress in making IT applications accessible to economic actors and general population has been achieved in the newly industrializing economies (NIEs) and some members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in some other larger countries, including China and India. Some of these economies are now capable of providing other regional countries with both technology and capital. The surge in the regional flows of FDI in IT illustrates a stepwise spread of investment and technology flows from Japan to the NIEs, from NIEs to ASEAN, and from ASEAN to others with more recent but significant involvement of China and India in this process.

78. While there are many possible outcomes from the continuing improvements in IT, there are also escalating risks for developing countries and economies in transition associated with its use. In many developing countries, in particular the least developed and island developing economies, as well as economies in transition, the level of investment in IT from public and private sources remains inadequately low, resulting in a slowing down of the process of IT diffusion. There are also great disparities in access to IT within different areas of regional countries and among different groups of the population. At the same time, as the experiences of more advanced regional economies has demonstrated, IT offers a once-in-a-century opportunity to create a new development paradigm that can accelerate development even in the poorest countries in the region.

79. Regional cooperation in IT can significantly contribute to the process of IT development of those disadvantaged countries. Because of the nature of their problem, they can easily use the experience, expertise and IT available in more developed regional countries especially for technology transfer, promotion of the use of IT by industries, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the financial and trade sectors, and human resources development. Furthermore, as regional countries are heterogeneous in a wide variety of development and economic levels, such differences can be exploited, with the use of IT, to take advantages of country differences in factors of production.

80. Taking into account the above, the regional meeting (round table) organized by ESCAP in cooperation with the Government of India (New Delhi, May 2000), provided a forum for ESCAP members and associate members to examine the increasingly important role of IT in the context of a knowledge-based global economy as well as to share information and experience on how IT could act as a catalyst for

integrating developing countries into the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis through the enhancement of efficiency and growth in their key sectors. The meeting covered the following areas: (a) structural features and processes that characterize a knowledge-based economy and what implications this has for the competitiveness, development and management of new products and services; (b) special efforts needed to create awareness and broad consensus on the needs, benefits and strategies of implementing IT in the commercial and industrial sectors, including promoting investment and trade in and through IT/electronic commerce in the Asian and Pacific region; (c) understanding the "digital divide" and its relationship to the existing and future technology gaps between developed and developing countries; (d) mechanisms and technologies that are required to ensure affordable access to information and connectivity for all, including members of civil society and disadvantaged groups; (e) role of Governments and international and United Nations agencies and other global and regional bodies in creating effective policies and strategies for capacity-building, including human resources and infrastructure development for IT; (f) regional cooperation.

81. To facilitate the discussions, two background documents entitled "Information technology and development I: Commercial and industrial dimensions" and "Information technology and development II: Capacity-building, cooperation and social dimensions", covering the preceding areas, were presented to the meeting.

ECLAC

82. ECLAC provided substantive and organizational support to the International Seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean on Information Technology and Development hosted by the Brazilian Government in Florianapolis, on 20 and 21 June 2000.

83. Representatives of member countries and from academia, the private sector and civil society participated in the meeting. The meeting focused the digital gap between the region and the developed world and perspectives for Latin America and the Caribbean in the age of ICT. The meeting was preceded by a one-day introductory conference on general issues regarding "Information society".

84. Despite the regional consensus regarding the importance of harnessing the developmental opportunities offered by globalization, there are many issues that need to be addressed in order to take full advantage of the information technologies, in terms of both development of physical infrastructure and policies aimed at facilitating full interconnectivity. The production patterns of Latin America and the Caribbean are undergoing a complex transition in organizational and technological terms which includes a revolution in the area of information processing systems. Although the transition towards the "society of knowledge" is inherent in the wider transformation, undoubtedly it has specific features and its own dynamic, making it necessary to carry out an in-depth analysis in order to understand the ways in which progress can be consolidated.

85. ECLAC will present a paper exploring the ways in which the region is "metabolizing" its transition towards the "society of knowledge" within the larger panorama of transition towards economies more deregulated and more open to world trade. Special attention is devoted to the changes in the morphology and behaviour of the telecommunications sector and to exploring possible lines of joint action by the public and private sectors, aimed at speeding up technological modernization and at reducing social equity and exclusion problems, which have clearly increased in the region as a result of the structural reforms.

ECA

86. ECA has accorded high priority to the issue of ICTs for development since 1980 with the inception of the Pan-African Development Information System (PADIS). The programme was updated in 1996 with the adoption by the ECA Conference of Ministers of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). The basic concept underlying the AISI is the use of ICTs for the development of information- and knowledge-based economies in Africa. To examine the progress made in the first three years of AISI, ECA organized the first African Development Forum (ADF-99) on the theme of "The Challenge to Africa of Globalization and the Information Age" from 24 to 28 October 1999, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

87. The African Development Forum is an annual event that brings together high-level policy and decision makers and practitioners to focus on a topical issue in Africa's development. Under the overall

theme, ADF-99 had four sub-themes: Africa and the information economy; strengthening Africa's information infrastructure; information and communication technologies for improved governance; and demonstrating access to the information society. ADF-99 was attended by over 950 participants, including stakeholders from civil society and academia, the private sector and high-level public sector officials. Youth, gender, the private sector and African "think tanks" were given particular emphasis. A number of initiatives were spawned at the African Development Forum, including a plan for a regional School Net Africa, an African Distance Learning Programme, discussion lists and activities related to gender and the information age in the context of the five-year review of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, NgoNET Africa (an action group to engage civil society in the promotion of ICT for African development), a telecentre network, activities to support the involvement of the African diaspora in knowledge and development in Africa, the formation of a business-to-business network, the Alliance for African Business and the formation of national action groups with the specific aim of preparing for the Global Knowledge Information Infrastructure.

88. ADF-99 will be followed by a Post-Forum Summit in late 2000 that is intended to provide member countries with the opportunity to assess the results of the African Development Forum and reach consensus on the most promising initiatives for follow-up at the national, subregional and regional levels. The first Post-Forum Summit will examine the information society strategies that were considered by ADF participants to be among the most promising in Africa's search for its own definition of the information society. Between 15 and 20 African heads of State will be invited to the Summit, along with chief executive officers (CEOs) of companies investing in the region and leaders of the development community. Papers and proposals will be prepared on four sets of issues that emerged from ADF-99: policy and regulation within a broad information and communication policy context; applications to support education processes and meet the needs of Africa's youth; electronic commerce — the experience and the potential for Africa; and ICT applications in the area of health.

ESCWA

89. ESCWA held an Expert Panel entitled "Information Technology and Development Priorities in the ESCWA Member Countries in the Context of a Global Knowledge-Based Economy", on 15 and 16 May 2000. The Panel addressed ways to formulate ICT policies, strategies and programmes for the ESCWA member countries and proposals for future innovative approaches by concerned organizations in government, enterprises, federations, non-governmental organizations and other civil society partners as weil as by the United Nations with a view to maximizing the benefits of the knowledge-based economy.

90. The Panel reviewed some 19 substantive presentations by experts from the member countries, and ESCWA staff, as well as from entities such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Topics addressed included the emerging knowledge-based global economy: principal features and implications for IT capacity-building in the ESCWA member countries; economics of information and communications technologies (ICT); e-commerce and new intellectual property rights: their impact on enterprise development in industry, agriculture, trade and services; towards an Arab knowledge-based economy: the role of public and private enterprise, as partners in ICT development; private enterprise and ICT innovation, research and development in ICT and telecommunications; and state of ICTs and relevant technology transfer/acquisition policies: global and regional trends and future prospects, and strategic and resources issues. There were brief statements on IT and telecommunications capacity-building in selected countries/institutions: infrastructures, resources, present trends and future orientations at policy and programmatic levels; IT and telecommunications technologies in selected priority areas such as distance learning, telemedicine, e-governance and environmental management; telework and gender perspectives; and resources for IT and telecommunications development. ESCWA staff presented substantive papers on the status of ICT in the ESCWA member countries; ICT transfer, dissemination and development activity; and sectoral aspects of ICT policy.

5. Regional meetings on financing for development

91. In response to General Assembly resolution 54/196 and the decision of the Preparatory Committee for the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, taken at its resumed organizational session held from 27 to 31 March 2000, the regional commissions will organize meetings in their respective regions, in cooperation with UNCTAD and the regional and subregional development banks. The involvement of the commissions, as well as their partner organizations, in issues of financing for development for their respective regions or subregions, and their convening power for articulating regional perspectives on global issues, should ensure important inputs to the global event to be held in 2001.

92. The regional meetings will be organized in the second half of 2000 so that the results will be fully reflected in the substantive preparations for the global event. The Commissions have begun preparations for these meetings, two of which will be hosted by the Governments of Colombia and Indonesia for the ECLAC and ESCAP regions respectively.

93. In conjunction with the meeting of the Executive Secretaries on 9 and 10 May 2000 in New York, the Executive Secretaries held informal consultations with the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee on the scope and the areas to be covered by their respective meetings. They also held consultations within the context of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD and UNDP, on the organizational and substantive arrangements for these meetings.

6. Improved coordination and cooperation among United Nations agencies at the regional level: meetings chaired by the Executive Secretaries in the five regions

94. In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, annex III, five regional coordination meetings were held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General in 1999, and reported on to the Council at its substantive session of 1999. The purpose of these meetings was to achieve greater coherence among the activities of the United Nations system at the regional level. A follow-up series of such meetings under the aegis of the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions will take place between April and June 2000. The meetings will cover the following areas and issues.

ECE

95. Building upon the first Inter-agency Coordination Meeting held for the ECE region in February 1999, a second meeting will be held in June/July 2000 that will review a draft common assessment of the situation in countries with economies in transition, prepared by ECE after the 1999 meeting and revised in the light of comments received from participating agencies. The review will have a three-fold objective: (a) to forge a common understanding on the priority needs and major challenges outlined; (b) to share among participants the policy directions promoted by each organization in its respective areas of competence, as a response to these challenges and needs; (c) to review the consistency among those directions in a United Nations system-wide perspective and, on this basis, to identify areas and activities where cooperation could be initiated or strengthened.

96. The meeting is expected to address two specific issues: (a) the support to be provided to sustainable social reforms and programmes in the context of transition, the challenge for the United Nations system active in these countries being to efficiently assist in addressing the structural deficiencies that hamper the development of the human resource base in the medium and long term, in particular through capacity-building programmes aiming at removing these deficiencies and developing a "good social governance"; (b) to determine how to fully use the United Nations system at the regional level for the purpose of economic and social development. This regional structure has significant proved assets: ability to address transboundary issues, to organize policy debates and exchange of experiences among countries having similar characteristics and concerns, to facilitate policy convergence, promoting subregional and regional integration, and to link such integration with developments at the global level. The challenge is to further reinforce these comparative advantages through cooperative undertakings among United Nations agencies that will support the subregional initiatives that are taken by countries of the ECE region and that aim at building lasting peace and development in

various parts of this region (for example, the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe).

ESCAP

97. During 1999, eight subcommittees under the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) met and addressed issues relating to (a) infrastructure development, (b) environment and development, (c) water, (d) space applications, (e) poverty alleviation, (f) advancement of women, (g) regional agenda for social development and (h) disability-related concerns.

98. To cite a few examples, the Subcommittee on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, chaired by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has been assisting the secretariat in preparing background documentation for the organization of the ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development, scheduled to be held in August/September 2000 in Japan, by providing information and data through exchange among its members. The Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation chaired by UNDP poverty alleviation has developed a common programme on empowerment of the poor to respond to the economic crises. In response to General Assembly resolution 52/15, ESCAP and UNESCO jointly organized the launch of the International Year for the Culture of Peace and commemorated the International Day of Peace at ESCAP on 14 September 1999. In general, ESCAP has been addressing priority development issues and implementation in collaboration with the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies in Bangkok, and with a number of subregional groupings.

ECLAC

99. Upon the basis of the agreements adopted at the first meeting chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General in 1999, the second regional coordination meeting for the ECLAC region, held on 15 May 2000, dealt with a more focused agenda in which the issue of generating a shared vision of the social equity problem in the region was at the apex.

100. Particular attention was given to setting up the basis for carrying out a survey of the resources of the United Nations system in the Caribbean as a first stage towards improving coordination of activities in that subregion. The meeting also explored different existing modalities for maximizing inter-agency initiatives and, in this context, reviewed activities carried out within the existing inter-agency cooperation schemes: the Inter-agency Technical Committee of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean; the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee for the Follow-up to the World Summit for Children and its working group on the reduction of maternal mortality; the inter-agency meetings to promote the integration of women in development; and the Joint Inter-agency Coordinating Committee for the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The meeting will also examine the regional follow-up process to the various United Nations summits and world conferences led by different agencies.

ECA

101. At the 1999 regional consultative meetings of United Nations agencies in Africa, it was agreed that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s should provisionally constitute the appropriate mechanism for coordination of United Nations system work in Africa. Consequently, the regional consultative meeting of United Nations agencies, to be convened in the framework of the ACC Steering Committee on Special Initiatives on 19 and 20 June 2000 at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, will take stock of the efforts of United Nations agencies working in Africa towards meeting the objectives under the Special Initiative, and the Secretary-General's report on Africa. It will consider indicators/benchmarks for assessing progress towards meeting the programme objectives under each Special Initiative cluster. The meeting will also include a special session on mobilizing the efforts of the United Nations agencies working on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in Africa.

ESCWA

102. Following the first meeting of the United Nations Regional Coordination Group (RCG) on 1 March 1999, regional offices of United Nations entities met for the second time, on 29 April 1999, at United Nations House, Beirut.

103. At the second meeting, it was decided (a) that the secretariat for the RCG would be established at ESCWA; (b) that each entity would appoint a focal point to facilitate coordination; (c) to prepare and exchange notes, through the secretariat, on the impact of the World Trade Organization agreements on their fields of activity; (c) to exchange information on training activities, joint agreements and major publications; (d) to establish a web site to facilitate communication between entities; and (e) finally, that the RCG would meet twice a year. Among actions taken in follow-up to this meeting, ESCWA is in the process of establishing a site for the RCG to serve as a gateway to users inside as well as outside the United Nations system.

104. ESCWA also prepared and distributed a table on activities jointly undertaken in the region by two or more United Nations entities. This table shows that as of 1995, 62 activities involving cooperation between two or more United Nations entities were undertaken in research, training, publications and meetings. The number of ongoing or to-be-completed activities in 1999 amounted to 41. So far, in 2000, activities undertaken by two or more United Nations entities are 18.

105. The first meeting of the RCG for the year 2000 is scheduled for the last week of April.

7. Cooperation with other regional bodies (see E/2000/10/Add.1)

II. Trends and activities (see E/2000/10/Add.2)

III. Interregional cooperation

A. Theme on regional cooperation: follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: exchange of regional experiences

106. Regional and subregional meetings were held by all five regional commissions on follow-up to the five-year review of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen) and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (Istanbul), between 1998 and 2000. Meetings in follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) took place in 1998. In addition to organizing the above regional and subregional follow-up conferences, which provided forums for discussions, exchange of experiences and renewed commitments to the objectives of the conferences, the commissions have undertaken a range of relevant activities. These have included conducting analytical studies as contribution to the implementation of the goals of the global conferences, as well as playing a facilitating role for bringing together member States, other regional organizations, United Nations entities and specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and other segments of civil society in order to establish and strengthen partnerships for collaborative action towards achievement of the objectives of these conferences. These meetings have clearly shown that the commissions are in a unique position to provide a region-wide forum for assessing the situation, exchanging experiences, developing strategies to address challenges and facilitating the active interface between Governments and civil society.

107. The commissions organized their review meetings in cooperation with other regional bodies and United Nations entities and specialized agencies. Regular consultations have fostered active collaboration and enhanced complementarity of roles and activities between the commissions and their partners, while minimizing duplication of efforts.

108. The outcomes of the regional conferences showed that none of the five regions is immune to internal and external challenges. While major experiences within regions and among regions have been heterogeneous, many of the challenges are common, particularly to developing regions. Although many Governments have made substantial advances towards specific initiatives and instruments that contribute to an accelerated realization of the objectives of the global conferences, major challenges remain with respect to, *inter alia*, the alleviation of poverty; gender-based violence and persistent gender discrimination in the labour market; achieving democratic governance and citizenship; promoting social integration; developing more comprehensive and multisectoral national policies for development; and financing for development. All regional reviews reflected the need for social or development indicators for monitoring and assessment as well as early warning mechanisms.

1. Priority issues and main challenges

ECE

109. The review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action[12] has revealed a number of priority issues and areas of concern. Discrimination in the labour market continues to present problems in terms of gender segregation, persistent wage gaps between women and men, and weak or non-existent social protection schemes for unemployed women and women in atypical employment. Domestic violence, while it affects a great number of women in the ECE region, is still considered a private matter in many countries and there is an insufficient awareness of its consequences, how to prevent it, and the rights of victims. Trafficking in women is a continuing problem in the region, with migrant women, women and girl refugees and displaced persons forming the most vulnerable groups as a result of various conflicts in the region and of the extension of organized crime networks. Women are still excluded from decision-making in political, economic and social spheres, with under-representation in party leadership and elected or appointed bodies. Lack of recognition of gender equality as an integral part of good governance, democracy and human rights, and slow progress in gender mainstreaming indicate a need to strengthen national mechanisms for the advancement of women and to develop better synergy between these mechanisms and civil society.

110. In the area of human settlements, based on the provisions of the Habitat Agenda[13] and Agenda 21, the draft ECE Strategy for Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty-first Century places emphasis on issues of common interest and concern for all countries in ECE. Five main challenges were identified: (a) promoting a system of meaningful and democratic governance that responds to the needs of local communities; (b) improving urban environmental performance; (c) facilitating social cohesion and security; (d) promoting market reforms in the housing and urban sectors; and (e) promoting land and real estate markets and securing private rights in land.

111. Many environmental problems of the world have their origin in the ECE region. ECE member countries bear the responsibilities in respect of contributing to a solution of these problems and aspire towards a global leadership role in pursuing sustainable development. Of importance to ECE countries is the integration of environmental policy with other policies as a key strategic tool in promoting sustainable development.

112. In terms of population, the ECE region experienced unprecedented demographic changes in the last two to three decades. Much-reduced birth rates emerged after a long period of fertility reduction and accelerated ageing of population. Apart from North American countries, ECE member States do not consider international migration a remedy and as a result, migration movements have abated in recent years in a number of countries. While the inhabitants of Western countries enjoy some of the highest life expectancies in the world, those in a number of Eastern European countries lag considerably behind, in some instances with an alarmingly large increase in male mortality.

113. These demographic developments pose complex and far-reaching challenges and have dominated the agendas of the regional intergovernmental population meetings.

ESCAP

114. Poverty remained profoundly entrenched and endemic, with millions of people in the region having little access to health, education and other basic social services. Unemployment remained a critical problem. The goals of social integration stood mostly unachieved. The instruments and means for overcoming problems remained far from adequate.

115. Many Governments had made substantial advances in lifting affected peoples in their country out of poverty, giving them opportunities for employment, and reducing levels of social exclusion in their communities. The financial crisis that struck many countries in the Asian and Pacific region beginning in mid-1997, however, set back social development, particularly in East and South-East Asia, increasing unemployment, reducing incomes, intensifying poverty and at the same time severely diminishing the quantity of public resources available for counteracting the adverse consequences of the crisis. Moreover, the intensification of the pace of globalization and liberalization continued to expose the economies of the countries concerned to intense international competition, necessitating nationwide restructuring. This added to the magnitude of the unemployment problem in affected countries including negative impacts on the labour force participation of women.

The region also experienced a slowdown not only in economic activity but also in the implementation of socio-economic development programmes and projects, including those relating to poverty alleviation, health, education, employment, family, social protection, shelter, environment and disaster management.

116. Some of the key gender-related issues identified included the opportunities as well as the challenges offered by globalization and integration, women and poverty, violence against women, human rights of women, women in the decision-making process, and strengthening of institutional mechanisms. The increased vulnerability of women to external shocks and slowing down of growth rates also posed special problems, requiring an integrated approach to remove structural and policy impediments faced by women. In that context, microlevel reforms and sectoral projects and programmes would need to be supported by macro-processes to improve the status of women in a rapidly globalizing world.

117. Key population and development issues include reproductive health and the need for policies and programmes to incorporate the totality of reproductive health care and to aim at reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, induced abortion, infertility, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. Attention should also be given to the issue of promoting a quality-of-care approach in providing reproductive health services. There is a greater need to address the issues of adolescent reproductive health, as this has been largely neglected in population and reproductive health programmes. Priority areas in population and development also include population ageing, urbanization, rural-urban migration and international migration.

118. Key environmental issues identified included: mitigating critical urban environmental situations; protecting ecosystems and natural resource bases; the integration of environmental economics and social decision-making; shortage of financial resources to support sustainable development activities; the need to foster and strengthen regional and subregional cooperation to develop coherent programmes to strengthen national-level capacities and joint action; and the need for resources and technology to reverse deteriorating environmental standards.

119. Cutting across the above areas of concern, the major issues and challenges confronting the region consisted of: (a) enhancing recognition that sustainable development, or more specifically poverty eradication, is the responsibility of all sectors in society, not just of the Government alone; (b) accelerating the pace in the establishment of government-civil society links, for example, cooperation between Government and private enterprises, non-governmental organizations, universities and research institutions, and the poor people themselves; (c) promoting progress in the devolution of legal, administrative and financial powers from higher to lower levels of government; (d) developing statistical indicators and efficient monitoring and evaluation systems for policy interventions, for various development projects and programmes; (e) improving resource mobilization and allocation as mandated by the global conferences; and (f) incorporating gender and environmental concerns into all aspects of development.

ECLAC

120. All regional meetings on follow-up to world conferences have shown a main concern with the need to address poverty, employment, social integration and equity in Latin America and the Caribbean. Within this perspective it was underlined that sustainable development requires a reconsideration of macroeconomic and social policies so as to ensure economic development with social equity and respect for human rights. Preventing further inequalities and poverty is possible only if there is a paradigm shift along these lines. The need to include gender equality, social, environmental, population and human rights issues in all public sector policies was very much stressed for the successful implementation of international commitments by member countries of the region.

121. Although moderate growth has taken place in the region, the persistence of the extension of structural poverty affecting particularly women, indigenous groups, rural population and young people remained evident. Uneven income distribution and the tendency towards higher social expenditure and low efficiency were also mentioned. Unequal and sometimes non-existent access to social services and protection schemes together with the persistence of gender discrimination in the labour market still characterizes the region. Therefore, the need to orient labour reforms and productive transformation in such a way as to generate more employment, particularly in the modern

sector of the economy, that would have positive effects on social well-being was stressed.

122. The outcome of the regional conference has also shown that there is a growing concern regarding the relevance of educational reforms as a means to obtain more equity and better opportunities for the future generations and stop intergenerational reproduction of poverty. Particular attention was given to the fact that education of women and girls deserved attention, especially among indigenous and rural populations.

123. The need to increase efforts in respect of capacity-building for the implementation of sustainable development programmes and projects was also stressed. The weight of sociocultural and institutional inertia was seen as a major obstacle to be overcome. The mobilization of public and private sector to promote social integration and sustainable development was identified as a main challenge. Insufficiency of resources was also emphasized. The need for appropriate institutional mechanisms and tools to monitor and evaluate adequately and in a timely manner the implementation of the international agreements was underscored. The improvement of collected data and indicators was considered of major relevance.

124. All processes have underlined the need to further strengthen the role of women in society. Women's empowerment especially at the decision-making level and the promotion of sociocultural changes were considered crucial for the achievement of equality in the region.

125. Last but not least, the need to advance in respect of democratic governing and citizenship participation so as to create a favourable political environment for social development was also emphasized. Civil society participation was considered a very important strategy to eradicate poverty and develop a full citizenship within the framework of democratic governance.

ECA

126. ECA has undertaken a range of activities, including organizing regional and subregional follow-up conferences and conducting analytical studies, as its contribution to the implementation of the goals of the global conferences. These activities have highlighted a number of cross-cutting priority issues and challenges that African countries need to address as part of an integrated response to achieving the goals of the global conferences. An illustrative list of such issues, in no particular order of importance, includes poverty reduction, improved governance, mainstreaming gender perspectives in development, strengthening the statistical databases of member States, and harnessing the skills, institutional infrastructure and financial resources in support of the goals of the conferences.

127. Africa has a high rate of poverty. ECA estimates that 47 per cent of the African population is living below the poverty line of about $37 per person per month. There is, however, a marked difference in the depth of poverty between the North Africa region, with 22 per cent of the population falling below the poverty line and sub-Saharan Africa, with 52 per cent of its population falling below the poverty line (ECA Economic Report on Africa, 1999). The problem of poverty is partly attributable to and exacerbated by the high incidence of unemployment in the region. At the same time, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is reducing life expectancy, diminishing workers' productivity and intensifying poverty at the household levels as a result of the death of many breadwinners.

128. There is increasing recognition that improved governance in its economic and political aspects is essential to achieving the goals of the global conferences. Economic governance entails creating the appropriate economic institutions and pursuing socio-economic policies to achieve sustained growth and development. Political governance pertains to upholding the principles of transparency, accountability and the rule of law in which institutions are established to adjudicate, mediate and manage disputes. This aspect of governance is crucial because the outbreak and persistence of conflicts in several African countries has not only slowed the process of realizing the goals of the conferences but, more generally, thwarted the development process in countries in conflict.

129. Gender mainstreaming in national policies and programmes is key to the goal of achieving gender parity in all aspects of development. While most African countries have drawn up comprehensive national plans of action for advancing women in the political and economic spheres, many have neither drawn up gender-sensitive sectoral policies, nor defined concrete strategies for coordinating the activities of relevant agencies or institutions dealing with women. Additionally, well-defined mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation process for national plans of action predicated on a set

of carefully formulated indicators have yet to be established. These observed institutional shortcomings are not peculiar to gender mainstreaming alone but are evident in the implementation of the programmes of other global conferences.

130. Reliable data and accurate information are key to the task of monitoring sectoral policies and evaluating progress in implementing the goals of the global conferences. Indeed, as part of the follow-up to the global conferences, African countries recognize the need to develop indicators to monitor progress in the implementation of agreed goals or targets set at the global conferences. Yet, in many African countries, the effort to develop reliable information and statistical data is often plagued by lack of basic data, lack of capacity for data collection and lack of resources with which to collect and store data. Thus, improving the national capacity to produce reliable data and information is essential to the follow-up to global conferences as well as for various aspects of development.

131. Implementing the goals of the global conference requires skills, institutional infrastructure and financial resources. Yet the ability of African countries to implement the goals of conferences is hampered by a lack of critical mass of experts with requisite skills and knowledge in the relevant government departments or agencies entrusted with the follow-up process. Overcoming these limitations will require attracting and retaining high-calibre professionals. Institutional infrastructure for implementation refers both to the establishment of the national decision-making structures and to the enactment of plans and regulations relevant to the programmes of the global conferences. There is progress in these areas, but much remains to be done. For example, a survey by ECA relating to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda revealed that 20 countries had established focal points for national implementation of Agenda 21, 15 had developed national Agenda 21 plans of actions and 17 had adopted laws and regulations on environmental impact assessment (EIA). EIA policy and regulations are being applied in agriculture, forests, land, human settlements, transport and tourism, urbanization and industrial development. In the area of human settlements, 17 countries have adopted shelter policies, 20 countries have enacted laws providing security of tenure and equal access to land, and 18 countries have adopted regulations to prevent discrimination in the housing sector. A significant number of African countries have promulgated national population policies, with many having adopted legislation to enhance reproductive health and reproductive rights.

132. Many African countries are experiencing a fiscal squeeze exacerbated by high external debt burden. This has resulted in very limited financial outlays in support of major commitments of the global conferences such as environment programmes, population issues and the allocation for basic social services, namely, education, health, access to clean water and healthy waste disposal systems. At the same time, there are inadequate mechanisms for mobilization of resources for areas such as shelter. Mechanisms such as mortgage banks and housing savings and credit schemes are lacking in many African countries. In general, the lack of adequate institutional infrastructure and skills, together with insufficient financial resources, is among the most significant constraints that hinder the efforts of African countries to achieve the goals of the various global conferences.

ESCWA

133. Several regional activities have been planned under the project on Integrated Regional Follow-up by Arab States to United Nations Global Conferences (1999-2001). The project is being funded by UNDP, and executed by ESCWA in the Arab region. The objective of this project is to promote well-integrated follow-up actions and to ensure that the plans of action of the conferences guide ESCWA's activities as well as its delivery of assistance to its member States.

134. The project promotes a regional framework for cooperation and exchange of experiences and information at the national and regional levels, with a view to enhancing and enriching the process of implementation and follow-up. It recognizes that cooperation in implementation and follow-up to global conferences at the national, regional, interregional and international levels needs to be conducted on two parallel tracks, namely, cooperation among countries and cooperation between agencies. It also recognizes that successful implementation of conference recommendations must have two prerequisites: that they be integrated within a conceptual framework for development; and that the follow-up activities be institutionalized through interlinked and coordinated implementation mechanisms, at all levels.

135. Thus the development of an integrated conceptual framework that links the themes and interrelated conference recommendations implies the necessity of identifying the cross-cutting objectives and themes of the conferences, as well as the most appropriate modalities and mechanisms for their implementation and for monitoring the follow-up process. Accordingly, in terms of priority issues and main challenges, the project defines five cross-cutting issues raised by the global conferences that are most relevant to the Arab region. They are described below.

(a) Empowerment of women, gender equity and equality

136. All the global conferences have recognized and underlined the fact that women are still facing injustice, are subject to unfair intra-family discrimination, receive less education, have less access to health care, nutrition and property, are still largely unemployed and when employed are underpaid, are victims of violence and abuse, and are relatively excluded from public life, power and decision-making.

137. The global conferences have recommended actions and strategies to combat many of the factors that contribute to sustaining the low status of women and have placed emphasis on the importance of this issue as a major component of human rights protection.

(b) Protection of the environment

138. The global conferences recognized that improving the health and well-being of people depends on a safe environment and, accordingly, in the planning of many development projects, environmental protection has become a major issue. The major causes of environmental degradation have been identified as unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; inadequate waste management; and the high concentrations of pollutants from industry, traffic and overcrowded settlements. One of the most serious environmental consequences is the increasing lack of access to safe water and sanitation.

(c) Empowerment of the family as a social unit

139. Rapid demographic and socio-economic changes, the multiple roles of women, widespread migration, displacement, urbanization, poverty and other related factors have increasingly placed the family unit in the region under strain. It is essential that all development strategies and quality-of-life initiatives recognize the family as the basic unit of society and acknowledge the importance of strengthening, protecting and supporting the family.

(d) Poverty reduction

140. Despite decades of efforts aimed at reducing poverty and promoting social development, poverty is still a major issue of concern in the Arab region, and the number of people living in poverty is actually increasing. The regional conference that ESCWA convened on the Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, held in Beirut from 8 to 11 December 1998, tackled the issue of poverty, discussing its causes and manifestations and warning of its consequences, and formulated actions and strategies in a global effort to combat poverty.

(e) Population movement

141. For the purpose of identifying the effect of population movement on sustainable human development, ESCWA convened a regional conference on the Follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Beirut from 22 to 25 September 1998. The conference identified categories of population movement, such as internal migration, which includes urbanization and internal displacement; and international migration, which includes both documented and undocumented migration, and the movement of refugees.

2. Main activities undertaken to respond to these challenges, and their major outcomes; and involvement of various actors in these activities, in particular non-governmental organizations

ECE

142. The ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was held in January 2000. The main outcome of the Meeting was the set of agreed conclusions adopted by the Governments that attended the Meeting. For each of the five areas taken up by the Meeting, the conclusions spell out key areas for action to be undertaken, with specific recommendations and responsible actors clearly specified for each area.

143. The Meeting benefited from a significant participation of non-governmental organizations in the

panels and in the open debate, as well as from their contributions to the agreed conclusions.

144. In the area of human settlements, land administration is crucial for security of tenure and property rights, effective housing policies and the promotion of market-oriented reforms in economies in transition, as well as in the context of European integration. ECE therefore established a specific working party on this issue, to carry out work on land administration guidelines and on the social and economic benefits of good land administration. A series of workshops were held on land market and property rights. Cooperation with the World Bank was enhanced concerning work on financing land administration projects in economies in transition.

145. As a response to Agenda 21 and the needs expressed by countries in the region, ECE has continued its work on legal instruments on the environment — to decrease the pollution load, to promote more effective environmental policies and to improve the possibilities for the public to influence environmental decision-making. Several environmental conventions have been negotiated and signed, the latest being the 1998 Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents also entered into force in April 2000. In addition, a new Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution[14] has been adopted (Gothenberg, Sweden, 1999), namely, the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone. All these developments have hugely contributed to combating some of the most pressing environmental problems in the region and brought together new networks of cooperation.

146. Environmental performance reviews (EPRs) have also been carried out on selected countries with economies in transition in the ECE region. Peer reviews of the EPR reports by the Committee on Environmental Policy enable both the strengths and the weaknesses of a country's environmental management to be addressed and its environmental trends to be assessed. Long-term solutions of the problems highlighted in the EPRs that address major issues covered by Agenda 21 are accompanied by strategic orientations and recommendations for environmental policy, developed in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental partners. Joint workshops with other international organizations, for example, UNDP, for selected countries on specific transition issues, are also organized as a follow-up to the review.

147. As a regional follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, a regional population meeting was organized by ECE, jointly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, and hosted by the Government of Hungary (Budapest, December 1998). The key document adopted by the Regional Population Meeting, entitled "Conclusions", assessed the successes and failures of recent policies and programmes in the various areas and identified needs for future policy and programme developments in response to ongoing population developments. The document reaffirmed the need for continued data collection, analysis and research in support of policy-making with respect to the major issues addressed by the Meeting.

148. In addition, ECE organized a conference on the Status of the Older Population in Europe and North America in December 1999, in Sion, Switzerland, in collaboration with the United States National Institute on Aging (NIA), UNFPA and the Institut Universitaire Kurt Bosch (IKB). The conference had three objectives: to review the conditions of life of older persons in the last decade of this century and identify the challenges for the future; to highlight findings from an ECE project to collect, disseminate and analyse microdata samples from the 1990 round of censuses in Europe and North America; and to prepare an agenda for future research in the field of ageing.

ESCAP

149. Governments focused their policies towards specific initiatives and instrumentalities that contributed to the speedy realization of the goals of the global conferences, both at the sectoral level and at the level of the disadvantaged target groups, taking into consideration the implications of current trends and issues emerging in the rest of the world. Within the limits of their resources and the targets and priorities they have set, Governments have initiated the integration of specific population and social development concerns and environmental and gender considerations into their national development plans. Some have enacted laws and established or strengthened implementing mechanisms in key areas of concern. Some have forged ahead and developed

integrated, multisectoral approaches to sustainable development which necessitated the establishment of national focal points or coordinating bodies for the implementation of the outcomes of global conferences/summits.

150. Although firmly committed to principles of self-reliance and self-help in the formulation and implementation of their development agenda, Governments in the region recognized the importance and centrality of assistance and support that could emanate from the international community. As the focal point of the United Nations in this region, ESCAP has consulted and cooperated with other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in the analyses of poverty alleviation issues and other population, social, environmental and related problems in the region; and in the formulation of action programmes for addressing these problems. An important example of these ESCAP initiatives is the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, as adopted in 1995 and amended in 1997, which contains time-bound goals and targets in various areas of concern including poverty alleviation, population, health, education, employment, shelter, environment, disasters, crime, social protection and the family. Moreover, subsequent to the conferences/summits, studies were undertaken and meetings and consultations were convened by ESCAP to exchange experiences and forge agreements among countries in the region on guidelines and plans of action on various areas including disability (Bangkok, 1999) and ageing (Macao, China, 1998). ESCAP has also played a facilitator role for Governments, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other segments of civil society with respect to establishing and strengthening partnerships or undertaking collaborative action towards the achievement of common objectives. In this regard, ESCAP has also collaborated with the intergovernmental organizations (for example, ASEAN, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the South Pacific Commission (SPC)), the private sector and other segments of civil society (for example, the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements in Asia and the Pacific (CITYNET)) in implementing specific projects. To strengthen national capabilities, ESCAP has disseminated information on progress and provided advisory services and technical assistance on various areas of concern in the region relating to population and social development, women in development and environment and sustainable development. Governments have tried to mobilize the special capabilities of ESCAP in respect of finding technical and financial support from the international community for the acceleration of implementation of national programmes in accordance with outcomes of global conferences/summits.

ECLAC

151. ECLAC has undertaken a variety of activities to support member countries in addressing these emerging issues. ECLAC's integrated approach favouring a multisectoral analysis of the issues involved governed most of the activities of the commission. However, when needed, specific attention was given to environmental, population, social, gender or human settlements issues.

152. The main activities undertaken and meetings organized by ECLAC included the eighth session of the Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, Lima, Peru, 8 to 10 February 2000, which adopted the Lima Consensus (E/CN.6/2000/PC/10, annex I); and the Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development for the region convened jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ECLAC with the support of UNDP, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organization of American States (OAS) in January 2000 in Santiago, Chile. The five-year review and appraisal of the implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development[15] showed that progress had been made in several areas, but that some obstacles remained. The review and appraisal identified the priorities for action in the coming years towards the full realization of the goals adopted in Cairo. This regional consensus, prepared with active participation of several regional non-governmental organizations and in close collaboration with UNFPA, constituted an important contribution of the region to the global preparatory activities for the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly to review and

appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, New York, 30 June-2 July 1999; and the Urban Indicators Programme, as part of the Global Urban Observatory supported by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) regional office and ECLAC, and applied in Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Barbados.

ECA

153. To help the countries in the region respond to the challenges relating to the follow-up to the global conferences, ECA has adopted a three-pronged approach that consists of undertaking policy research to highlight key concerns or issues to member States, organizing policy forums for the sharing of experiences and best practices, and providing technical assistance to member States to support the implementation of the programmes of action of the various global conferences.

154. ECA has undertaken a wide range of studies to highlight the key issues or priorities of member States in the follow-up to the global conferences. Thus, for example, a study on the progress of the implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa presented to the first meeting of the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development revealed that in designing and implementing environmental policies and programmes, African countries had placed emphasis, in a descending order of importance, on issues of land-use planning, biological diversity, use of forests, climate change, sustainable agriculture, hazardous wastes, desertification and drought, solid wastes management and toxic waste.

155. A study presented to the Sixth Regional Conference on Women in Africa organized by ECA in November 1999 evaluated the progress made in the implementation of critical areas of concern identified in the Dakar Platform for Action (E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.2) and Beijing Platform for Action. Forty-three of the 53 countries in the region participated in the national evaluation surveys on the achievements and constraints in the critical areas of the Platforms for Action. The 12 areas of concern were ranked by countries in terms of their priority, in descending order of importance, as follows: poverty was ranked first by 41 countries; education was ranked next by 39 countries; health was ranked third by 39 countries; human rights was ranked fourth by 34 countries; and women in decision-making and violence against women were ranked fifth and sixth, respectively. Institutions, economy, media, environment, the girl child and conflict were ranked from seventh to twelfth.

156. Mobilization of resources for social development is one of the main commitments of the World Summit for Social Development. An analysis by ECA in its 1999 Economic Report on Africa revealed that, on average, an African country spent in 1999 only 3.6 per cent of its GDP on education and 1.6 per cent of GDP on health. There was considerable variation across countries, with the minimum spent on education having been 0.9 per cent of GDP and the maximum 6.7 per cent of GDP. For health, the figures were 0.2 per cent of GDP and 2.9 per cent of GDP respectively.

157. ECA and UNFPA collaborated in preparing a report that documented the experience of African countries in the implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development[16] and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The report highlighted achievements and best practices in African countries in the areas of reproductive health and reproductive rights; family, youth and adolescents; gender equality, equity, empowerment of women and male involvement; the role of non-governmental organizations and the private sector in programme implementation; population policy and development strategies; and advocacy and information, education and communication (IEC) strategies. Among some of the most notable best practices in these areas are the establishment of community-based distribution centres for non-prescriptive contraceptives in some countries; the establishment of special programmes either in school or out of school to meet the needs of adolescents; and the development of national plans of actions that specifically address the issues of women's empowerment in several countries, especially promoting women's equal participation in the labour force. The study on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development was disseminated to policy makers and presented for discussion at the follow-up committee on the implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Action of the

International Conference on Population and Development.

158. Convening policy forums for sharing experiences and disseminating best practices has been an important tool in supporting the efforts of African Governments in the follow-up to the global conferences. Thus, ECA has organized subregional follow-up conferences to review progress in the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the Beijing Platform for Action. In addition, it convened an international conference on the theme of African women and economic empowerment: investing in our future, in April 1998, and the sixth regional conference on African women in November 1999 to provide an in-depth assessment in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The issues relating to the follow-up to Agenda 21 and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) were discussed at the first meeting of the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development, held in 1999. The Committee provides policy guidance with respect to the interrelated issues of population, environment, human settlements and food security. Matters relating to the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development were discussed at the third Meeting of the Regional Follow-up Committee on the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

159. As noted earlier, various analytical studies undertaken by ECA were presented for discussion at these meetings convened by ECA. While the analytical research studies have contributed to increasing the awareness of policy makers on issues that need to be addressed, the deliberations in the various policy forums have enabled member States to renew their collective commitment to and resolve towards the goals of the global conferences.

160. Technical assistance to member States of the region for the follow-up to the global conferences has taken a variety of forms. It has included support for countries in developing their national plans of action for implementation of goals of the global conferences and support for capacity-building, especially for the national institutional structures entrusted with the follow-up of the global conferences. ECA has also encouraged and supported member States with respect to adopting an integrated approach to some of the goals of the global conferences. Thus, for example, it has developed the Population-Environment–Development-Agriculture (PEDA) model which helps member States to analyse and understand the consequences of the policy options available to address specific issues in one or more of the areas of population, agriculture and environment. The PEDA model is being customized for use by more member States.

ESCWA

161. The role of ESCWA in the conference follow-up process at the regional level included the following: (a) providing a regional forum where member States discussed, compared and analysed their situations and their efforts, including tools and methodologies developed for the implementation of recommendations of global conferences, as well as for exchanging information and experiences, developing strategies and future key actions, and enhancing the mechanism of governments, *inter alia*, for partnership with civil society; and (b) organizing the Arab Conference on Integrated Regional Follow-up to United Nations Global Conferences and a round-table discussion on 4 and 5 October in Beirut, where cross-cutting themes and methodological issues were discussed, and country reports on implementation and follow-up were presented.

162. The objective of the round-table discussion was to clarify the concept of partnership between Governments and civil society in the Arab region as a tool for improving the follow-up process to United Nations global conferences. The participants included government representatives, scholars from universities and research institutions, United Nations and regional organizations, independent experts, the media, non-governmental organizations and civil societies. Future meetings will be held to discuss particular themes for the follow-up process and to encourage more free discussions between Governments and civil society. The next round-table discussion will be on capacity-building of non-governmental organizations.

163. The objective of the Arab Conference on Integrated Regional Follow-up to United Nations Global Conferences was to assess and evaluate the status of implementation, to suggest further action to be taken, and to discuss the mechanisms used for implementation and follow-up, especially with regard to common concerns addressed by the global

conferences. The conference provided ESCWA with an opportunity to review and to consolidate the findings of the national reports, and other relevant reports, such as the common country assessments (CCA), that include and identify national priorities, strategies and challenges in the fields of social development. In addition, the outcome of discussions at the Conference gave member States and ESCWA and its partners a better overview on developments in the region on issues of follow-up.

164. ESCWA produced several studies on poverty measurement and situation analysis in 1998 and in 1999, which show that poverty remains a major problem in many countries of the Arab region, one that requires intervention by Governments and civil society. Future plans include conducting more policy-oriented research on the issue of poverty and providing training to national personnel on the appropriate tools and approaches on poverty reduction.

165. The study on the social development situation and trends in the Arab region revealed that there is no consensus among member States on indicators to be used to evaluate and monitor follow-up on the impact of implementation at the regional level. This issue was discussed extensively during the Arab Conference when it was agreed that comparative research is needed for the development of additional indicators. Future activities include selection and computation of indicators from available data at the national level, and the preparation of a training workshop for national personnel on these social indicators.

166. ESCWA, as a multidisciplinary United Nations entity in its structure, programmes and technical expertise, is well placed to undertake the integrated follow-up actions and to report on the implementation status of cross-cutting themes and goals of conferences, in support of the efforts of Governments. It produces regional support products, such as guidelines, databases and specific project proposals, to enable member States to implement efficiently and effectively the recommendations of the global conferences, especially the cross-cutting themes. In this respect, ESCWA embarked on developing a Guide/Easy-user Manual for Implementation and Follow-up to Global Conferences. The draft guide was presented in the Arab Conference on Regional Integrated Follow-up to United Nations Global Conferences where it was extensively discussed. ESCWA also initiated a quantitative and textual database on social development in which indicators are linked with the policies of social development. A prototype of the database was prepared and presented in the above-mentioned Arab Conference. Both the Guide and the database drafts were well received by Governments and civil society organizations in view of the need at the national level for such tools, and member countries in general expressed support and willingness to provide assistance for the development of these materials.

167. ESCWA also plays an advocacy role for promoting and raising awareness of relevant development issues and the necessary action to be taken. In this regard, ESCWA carries, produces and disseminates information material about the process of implementation and follow-up and for promoting the cross-cutting issues and the recommendations of the global conferences. The material produced included: (a) an information desk-type brochure on the most relevant cross-cutting issues for the Arab region context in the plans of action of the global conferences (poverty reduction, empowerment of the family as a social unit, protection of the environment, empowerment of women and gender equality, and population movement); (b) a Web page highlighting the goals and activities of the integrated regional follow-up by Arab States to global conferences project as well as disseminating information related to recommendations of the conferences and to the impact of their implementation on improving the quality of life in the Arab countries; and (c) a Newsletter to disseminate information on best practices and success stories by Governments, civil societies and United Nations agencies on follow-up activities in the Arab States.

168. The dissemination of information material increased awareness about and interest in the integrated regional follow-up project, and the cross-cutting issues it addresses, as well as the activities implemented under it in the region. In addition, the Gender Media Campaign, launched by ESCWA in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University, aims to raise awareness of policy makers and the public about gender issues through television spots.

3. Complementarity of roles and activities with other United Nations organizations

ECE

169. The ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting was organized with the cooperation of four major partners

that are most active in the region on the themes addressed, namely, UNDP, UNIFEM, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, and on the bases of their respective areas of competence. UNDP and UNIFEM provided financial support which made it possible for a large number of non-governmental organizations from ECE countries with economies in transition to be present.

170. ECE regularly coordinates activities relating to human settlements in the ECE region and recently participated in a UNEP Balkan task force (as part of a team dealing with human settlements and land administration issues). Substantive participation in inter-agency meetings and regular contacts with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) are maintained, in particular in order to keep them informed on the preparation of the ECE ministerial meeting which will provide inputs to the five-year review of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) process.

171. The streamlining of the United Nations work on the environment in the region is secured by annual coordination meetings between ECE and the UNEP Regional Office for Europe. Also, the day-to-day cooperation has increased in terms of projects, workshops and frequent contacts between experts. The Protocol on Water and Health is a result of this cooperation between ECE and WHO/Europe. The cooperation with UNDP has proved to be most fruitful on the country level and in subregional projects. Activities of other bodies such as the European Union (EU), OECD, the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) task force, UNEP, the Council of Europe, and Baltic Agenda 21 are fully taken into account.

172. UNFPA continues to be the main partner of ECE for initiating a new programme of activities as a follow-up to the five-year review of the outcome of the International Conference on Population and Development. Along with the other regional commissions, ECE took part in the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. ECE also collaborated with the Global Population Information Network (POPIN) Project with a view to setting up new national POPIN sites in countries in transition.

ESCAP

173. ESCAP organized the regional review meetings in follow-up to global conferences/summits in cooperation with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. Regular consultations that were held with these entities, *inter alia*, at the sessions of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) and its subcommittees and task forces have fostered active cooperation and collaboration, and enhanced complementarity of roles and activities between ESCAP and other United Nations organizations, while minimizing duplication of efforts. Collaboration in the implementation of joint projects has also been promoted by ESCAP.

ECLAC

174. Most of the above-mentioned activities and other initiatives converging towards the preparatory processes of the global conferences were organized in collaboration with other United Nations organizations. Wide and strong collaboration took place with those involved in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the countries participating in the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity[17] and protocol on biosafety, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[18] and the Kyoto Protocol thereto[19] and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix II). Joint activities were undertaken with UNDP to develop instruments for environmental management in the region. The Forum of Ministers of the Environment was supported by an Inter-agency Technical Committee whose members are UNEP, UNDP, ECLAC, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

175. The regional consensus on population and development was prepared in collaboration with UNFPA and several analytical studies by UNFPA, UNIFEM, ILO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO and the World Food Programme (WFP) were submitted to the Regional Conference on Women.

ECA

176. Various agencies of the United Nations system have actively collaborated with ECA in the

implementation of the activities relating to the follow-up to the global conferences. The range of collaboration has included funding, establishing a joint secretariat for servicing meetings for the follow-up process and preparing joint studies.

177. UNDP, UNIFEM and UNFPA provided funding to ECA for organizing the subregional follow-up meetings on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the International Conference on African Women and Economic Empowerment: Investing in Our Future, held in April 1998, and the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women, held in November 1999. UNFPA has collaborated with ECA in co-organizing several regional conferences, most notably the preparatory meetings for the International Conference on Population and Development and its mid-decade review. ECA, OAU and UNFPA form the joint secretariat for the regional Follow-up Committee on the Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

178. ECA is currently working with the Regional Office for Africa of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in the preparations for the five-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be held in Addis Ababa in 2000. A joint secretariat including ECA, UNEP, OAU and the African Development Bank are collaborating in undertaking the preparatory work for the 10-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other issues relating to the implementation of Agenda 21.

ESCWA

179. The steering committee established for the integrated regional follow-up project includes representatives of the League of Arab States and all United Nations regional agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, WHO, UNFPA and UNIDO). The Committee also includes ECA which represents the Arab countries in North Africa.

180. During the round-table discussion and the Arab Conference, United Nations agencies presented reports on their experiences on partnership and follow-up issues and lessons learned were discussed with all participants. Since the Arab Conference, UNICEF in cooperation with ESCWA has been conducting the regional 10-year review of the World Summit for Children in preparation for the next summit meeting in February 2001. The process was initiated in March 2000 and it is planned that an Expert Group Meeting for the Children's Summit will be held in June 2000. This initiative also led to further discussion on other joint activities. Other regional United Nations entities and agencies such as UNFPA and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) are cooperating with ESCWA and coordinating efforts in this regard.

4. Problems and issues for follow-up; priorities for further action

ECE

181. Following the regional preparatory meeting on the five-year appraisal of the outcome of the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, steps are being taken for securing financial support for developing gender mainstreaming activities in a number of areas in countries with economies in transition, within the ECE mandate.

182. The fact that future activities of the human settlements programme of ECE will address, in particular, practical experiences in environmentally sound management of local transport and land-use planning may lead to a substantial reduction in the negative impact on human health, natural resources and environment.

183. ECE activities in the field of environment will continue to focus on the strengthening of the institutional capacity and competence of member countries mainly through exchange of experiences and advisory assistance for the effective implementation of and compliance with the regional legal instruments developed by ECE. Another major direction for further action will encompass the review of environmental priorities and promotion of policy instruments to prevent and reverse environmental degradation by fully integrating environmental considerations into sectoral policies.

184. In the field of population, further action will be undertaken for implementing the key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,[20] particularly in countries with economies in transition. Activities will consist of

collection and processing of data, analysis and research, national capacity-building, including training, and information networking, focusing on behaviour and status of men and women of different generations.

ESCAP

185. In the field of social development, follow-up actions need to be taken at national and international levels. Such follow-up action is needed to: increase continued support for poverty alleviation, income- and employment-generation and social integration including the provision of income and related support for the poor and to the informal sector; strengthen governance and accelerate the decentralization process; continue strengthening of partnerships between government and civil society including the media and deepen recognition of the fact that the task of eradicating poverty is not the responsibility of Governments alone but is shared by all sectors in the economy and society; accelerate capacity-building at all levels, to make social development a self-sustaining process; plan and implement population and social programmes that take into account the dynamic demographic, economic, political, environmental and technological framework and maximize benefits from advances in information and communications technology; and establish monitoring and evaluation systems for all policy interventions.

186. In the field of environment and development, ESCAP will pursue the regional implementation of Agenda 21, the decisions of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly held in June 1997 and will provide support to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. In this effort, it will involve countries of the region in the development of a regional action programme for 2001-2005 with a focus on the targeted and critical environmental issues addressing air and water quality, domestic and industrial wastes, water resource management for clean and adequate supply, protection of ecosystems and biodiversity, appropriate development of land resources, desertification control, coastal environmental issues, climate change and sustainable energy development to promote conservation and efficiency including the use of renewable energy. The core activities will include capacity development at the national level, regional cooperation and the involvement of stakeholders in government, civil societies and the business sector. Education and awareness on the environment are crucial for achieving tangible results for which ESCAP will continue to work closely with the media and non-governmental organizations.

187. In the field of women and development, the following have been identified as priorities for further action in the Asian and Pacific region: the political and economic empowerment of women, following a rights-based approach and specific strategies; concerted measures to counter the negative effects of the slowdown in growth rates in many countries of the region, particularly on female labour force participation; promotion of universal awareness of all human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social, including the right to development — and the fundamental freedoms of women and children, including the girl child, through comprehensive gender-sensitive human rights education and legal literacy programmes; legal reform including constitutional provisions on gender equality and the use of affirmative action policies, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Women's Convention)[21] and other human rights treaties; mobilization of resources and support for innovative non-governmental organizations and individuals engaged in women's empowerment activities in critical areas of concern; and promotion of partnership and cooperation between Governments, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations in Asia and the Pacific.

188. In the population field, the major challenge is to overcome the social and cultural barriers that sustain gender inequality and support the limited responsibility of men in matters related to reproductive health. There is a need for programmatic strategies to target youth in programmes of education about the practice of responsible sexual relations and male participation in family planning. Major challenges remain in providing adolescents and youths with reproductive health services. In many countries, a policy framework is needed for issues related to adolescents, including legislation related to age at marriage, access to reproductive health information and services, and child prostitution and sexual abuse. Constraints remain on forging a more effective partnership between the non-governmental sector and government. Constraints also exist on the taking advantage of expanded opportunities by groups in civil society. Some of these constraints are related to the perceptions of

Governments about the appropriate roles for institutions of civil society, while other constraints are related to the underdevelopment of civil society in many countries of the region as well as to human and financial factors.

189. In addition to the provision of technical and financial support to national Governments in the implementation of action programmes to address the key issues enumerated above, ESCAP's follow-up action would provide technical and financial assistance towards: improving understanding of the social impacts of, and identifying the appropriate social policy and programme responses to, financial crises; the strengthening of the legal and institutional framework; the establishment, operation and strengthening of social protection systems; preventing the spread of the HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases; and conducting social assessments in linking social policies with economic policies to ensure the simultaneous achievement of social and economic goals; development and standardization of social development indicators and continuous monitoring of progress in the attainment of the quantitative targets in the various sectors set up by the countries in the regional and global conferences; strengthening of regional and international cooperation and coordination in dealing with issues on drug trafficking, trafficking of women and children, migrant workers, refugees and displaced persons, transnational organized crime and environmental problems while strengthening regional and subregional efforts such as those by ASEAN and SAARC in pursuing the goals of social development; and mainstreaming of social development concerns in programming and evaluating ODA.

ECLAC

190. Although there are specific issues concerning each of the world conferences and summits, the outcome of all have demonstrated the need to develop an integrated approach in which priority should be given to equity, citizenship and development as three dimensions of sustainable development. The need to continue working within an integrated framework allowing the making of linkages between sectoral development issues on one hand, and regional and global issues on the other, has been emphasized. The struggle against poverty as a part of sustainable economic growth was seen as a major priority requiring social integration and empowerment of excluded groups. New institutional arrangements including decentralization and development of participatory institutions were considered a high priority.

ECA

191. The process of the follow-up to the global conferences has served both to underline the intricate linkages among the main themes of the various conferences and to reinforce the fact that meeting the challenge of development requires a comprehensive approach. Indeed, the problems that African countries have encountered in implementing the programmes of action of the global conferences broadly reflect the constraints they face in promoting development in the region.

192. As such, the priorities for further action in accelerating the process of implementing the goals of the global conferences overlap with those for fostering development in Africa. The first priority is building African countries' State capacity which is defined as the ability of the government to define its policies and design and implement the programmes to achieve the desired outcomes. The effects of prolonged conflicts in some countries and of economic crisis in others have contributed to the weakening of the capacity of the Governments in several African countries. Given that the government is the major actor in implementing the programmes of the global conferences, it is vital that support be provided for making the State more able to perform the tasks required to achieve the goals of the conferences.

193. A closely related priority is the funding of programmes designed to strengthen the capability of the State. Such programmes would centre on enhancing the administrative and technical capacity of public sector staff, especially those in the professional cadre as well as strengthening the institutions of governance, particularly those government institutions that are entrusted with the implementation of the goals of the global conferences. The African Governments clearly have a major responsibility in mobilizing resources for human and institutional capacity-building programmes in their countries. However, donor support towards national efforts remains very important. A third priority is the strengthening of international cooperation for development which should be reflected in increased ODA and significant debt relief to African countries. Enhanced international cooperation for development was meant to be a key element in achieving the goals

of the global conferences. This promise should be turned into reality in support of the efforts of African countries.

ESCWA

194. Some of the constraints to be addressed include the lack of information on some of the cross-cutting issues that require additional efforts for data collection and capacity-building of non-governmental organizations that are still in need of institutional and technical assistance to become effective partners with Governments.

195. Other constraints include sensitivities between non-governmental organizations and Governments arising upon the request of the non-governmental organizations to play a strong role in the follow-up process. Also the cultural constraints and political instability that restrain effective follow-up of advancement of women issues deserve priority attention.

B. Cooperation among the regional commissions

Trade facilitation United Nations/CEFACT

196. Trade facilitation activities in ECE are organized under the United Nations Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport (United Nations/CEFACT). Acknowledging that, in an increasingly global economy, it is essential for the success of trade facilitation to take into consideration the needs of all countries and to work closely with them, United Nations/CEFACT allows for the full participation of non-ECE countries and international organizations. While trade agreements, standards and conventions must often be global and widely implemented in order to be effective, the conditions under which they are implemented are often unique to a country, subregion or region owing to differences in available trade infrastructures, national legal systems and management practices. The regional commissions are thus in a unique position to work with United Nations/CEFACT to help to close the gap between local and global realities.

197. All five regional commissions participate in the work of United Nations/CEFACT. ECE, along with the other commissions, is currently exploring the possibilities of new methods for the introduction and implementation of trade facilitation techniques and electronic commerce in the different regions. In this connection, several joint expert group meetings and seminars have been carried out by ECE with ESCWA and ECA and all three commissions have agreed to carry out a workshop on trade facilitation at ECA headquarters to increase awareness about trade facilitation issues in the African region. ECLAC has long participated in raising awareness and is disseminating information on United Nations/CEFACT to many parties implementing trade facilitation in its region. ECE and ESCAP have also closely collaborated on certain trade facilitation issues leading to the issuance of training guides on electronic data interchange, and to the organization of joint seminars. ESCAP has also set up a mirror site of the ECE Trade Facilitation Information Exchange (TRAFIX) web site. The two commissions are also collaborating on trade facilitation issues in the framework of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

Cooperation in the Mediterranean

198. At its last session, ECE recognized that additional efforts should be made to mobilize resources with a view to responding to the specific circumstances and needs of the Commission's Mediterranean countries. Following subsequent discussions among the Executive Secretaries of ECE, ECA and ESCWA, the Governments of the Mediterranean member countries of the three regions were invited to consider possibilities of pursuing joint activities for the benefit of their countries.

199. In response to this invitation, the Governments of Croatia, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Turkey informed the ECE secretariat of their priorities for cooperation in the ECE region, which included energy and energy efficiency; trade, including trade facilitation and free trade; environment, including air pollution and water; transport and customs; agriculture; training; statistics; harmonization of conventions and standards; and legislation.

200. As a result of further discussions in Bangkok in February 2000 between the Executive Secretaries concerned, project proposals are being prepared by ECE for further consideration and discussion among the three regional commissions in: solar applications and energy efficiency in buildings of the Mediterranean

countries; sustainable tourism; trade facilitation; promoting and assessing legal instruments for the management and protection of shared water resources; follow-up to an interregional action plan on transport issues drawn in the Cairo meeting of the Heads of the Transport Divisions of the Regional Commissions in December 1999 (see below).

Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)

201. SPECA was developed jointly by ESCAP and ECE at the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) that are member of both commissions. The programme, established by the Tashkent Declaration of 26 March 1998 (A/53/96, annex II), seeks to strengthen subregional cooperation among the member countries concerned and facilitate their economic integration into Europe and Asia. It is envisaged that SPECA will be "*à géométrie variable*" (of variable geometry) which would allow for some projects to be implemented on a subregional basis, while the geographical coverage of other projects will be extended to include countries outside the subregion, particularly neighbouring countries.

202. Project working groups (PWGs) have already been established in the areas of (a) transport infrastructure and border-crossing facilities (lead country: Kazakhstan); (b) rational and efficient use of energy and water resources (lead country: Kyrgyzstan); and (c) an international economic conference on Tajikistan, a joint regional development strategy and promotion of foreign investment (lead country: Tajikistan).

203. The other two PWGs on "Regional cooperation in the development of multiple routes for pipeline transportation of hydrocarbons to global markets (lead country: Turkmenistan)" and on "Restructuring of manufacturing industries with a view to creating internationally competitive enterprises (lead country: Uzbekistan)" are not yet operational.

204. A meeting of Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Central Asian States took place on 8 and 9 December 1999 in Almaty where the concept paper on SPECA was discussed and is now pending formal adoption by the participating States. It was also recommended that the presentation of SPECA to the world community should take place in the first half of 2000.

Cooperation within the SPECA project on rational and efficient use of energy and water resources

205. In addition to ECE/ESCAP cooperation within the SPECA project on rational and efficient use of energy and water resources, ECE and ESCAP are considering cooperation for a demonstration zone for energy efficiency, to be established in the far east of the Russian Federation within the framework of a United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) project.

Guideline for energy conservation laws for economies in transition

206. ESCAP and ECE are preparing a Guideline for energy conservation laws for economies in transition, including the Russian Federation and selected countries of Central Asia, which is now ready for publication.

ECE/ESCWA cooperation in the field of agricultural standards

207. In 1999, the secretariat and Chairman of ECE's Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development participated and lectured at an expert group meeting in Beirut indicating possibilities on how ECE standards could be used in the ESCWA region. Twenty-five ECE standards have been translated into Arabic and circulated to the member countries. A follow-up meeting concentrating on standards for meat and seeds is planned for autumn 2000.

ECLAC/ESCAP interregional cooperation in trade and investment

208. ESCAP in cooperation with ECLAC organized a brainstorming Seminar on Interregional Cooperation in Trade and Investment: Asia-Latin America, at Bangkok in February 2000, to promote trade and investment between Asia and Latin America. The Seminar identified various obstacles contributing to the low levels of trade and investment between the two regions. It also made recommendations on how to promote interregional economic activity. The participants agreed to continue the process of interregional cooperation initiated in the seminar with increased

involvement of the private sector. The focus of the next meeting would be on the role of SMEs in promoting interregional trade and investment flows.

Meeting of ECE and ESCAP with the Government of Bangladesh

209. ECE and ESCAP held together two consultative meetings with the Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka on the legal and regulatory framework for private investment in infrastructure and on providing a negotiating platform to assist civil servants in negotiating balanced concession agreements with foreign investors. Such agreements would allow projects to proceed with little or no capital expenditure by the host Government and could have the effect of easing the debt burden of Bangladesh and releasing public resources for poverty alleviation. ECE will continue with this cooperation by, *inter alia*, bringing two representatives of that Government to Geneva to attend the ECE's International Forum on Public-Private Partnerships in December 2000. The Forum will give the Government of Bangladesh an opportunity to showcase their projects to foreign investors.

Transport and communications

210. A meeting of the heads of transport and communications of the regional commissions was held from 7 to 9 December 1999 in Cairo, and was hosted by the Ministry of Transport of the Government of Egypt and ECA. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Governments of Egypt and Morocco. The purpose of the meeting was to initiate a dialogue among the five secretariats of the regional commissions with a view to (a) identifying possible interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages and to draw up an action plan in order to assist their respective member countries in achieving full participation in the rapidly globalizing economy; and (b) identifying a number of other areas where cooperation could be developed among the regional commissions to share each other's experiences for the benefit of their respective member countries.

211. Member States have already given important mandates to the regional commissions to promote intraregional and interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages. Since the beginning of these regional initiatives, considerable progress has been achieved despite the wide differences in the pace of implementation. The meeting was of the view that all these would benefit from more effective interregional linkages and, accordingly, identified several potential interregional transport links that could be undertaken. It also identified a number of other areas for cooperation where experience could be shared, such as commercialization/privatization of transport infrastructure and operations; establishment of inland container depots (ICDs); and financing of road maintenance. Concrete ideas have been put together in a five-year draft action plan (2001-2006).

212. The action plan is to be implemented by undertaking a series of technical studies that will: (a) assess the traffic potential along the links tentatively identified; (b) review the facilitation measures in use at the border, the condition of links, and the gauge difference in the railways; and (c) identify the most promising corridors for interregional movement as well as physical and non-physical barriers that need to be removed.

213. The programme will also contribute to further strengthening the national capacities by organizing training activities to upgrade the skills on how to approach network identification/development and address the issue of physical and non-physical impediments to the movement of goods, and passengers both by road and rail. In addition, experience-sharing in identified areas among the countries of various regions will be promoted.

214. The Executive Secretaries agreed that the chiefs of transport of the regional commissions should meet once a year to pursue the initiative already taken, and that the next meeting would be hosted by ESCWA in January 2001. They also decided to submit a project proposal for implementation of the action plan, for funding under the United Nations Development Account for the period 2002-2003.

Public information meeting

215. A meeting of the Public Information Officers of the Regional Commissions was organized by the Regional Commissions New York Office (RCNYO) at Headquarters in New York, on 2 and 3 March 2000. The objective of the meeting was to share experiences in this area in order to further improve the commissions' public information strategies within the regions in respect of their work and the work of the United Nations as a whole. The Public Information Officers of the Regional Commissions met with

representatives of the media and relevant non-governmental organizations accredited to the United Nations, and held joint Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat/regional commissions meetings for consideration of issues of common interest, in particular, the preparations for the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations.

216. The meeting was also organized back to back with a Department of Public Information-sponsored meeting of United Nations Information Centres, held at Headquarters on 6 and 7 March 2000, in which the Public Information Officers of the Regional Commissions also participated.

IV. Further measures undertaken by the commissions since spring 1999 to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency

217. In its resolution 1998/46, annex III, the Economic and Social Council welcomed the reform measures undertaken by the commissions and encouraged them to undertake further efforts to achieve greater focus, effectiveness and efficiency. The present section provides the Council with information on recent initiatives undertaken during the period under review.

ECE

218. As a follow-up to the reform, ECE adopted, at its 1999 session, a revised system of priority-setting to be applied during the budget submission year by all PSBs for their respective programmes of work. The revised system is being applied for the first time in 2000 and the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work will meet by the end of the year in order to make recommendations on the overall direction of ECE work and the distribution of resources among the main areas of ECE activity.

219. Furthermore, following a senior management retreat held in 1999, it was decided to launch a process of internal reflection on two broad areas. The first consists of strategic thinking on how ECE can (a) respond to demands emerging from new developments in the region or at the global level; (b) better integrate analytical, normative and operational activities; (c) develop a multisectoral approach to solving problems of a multidimensional nature; and (d) enhance its role as a regional arm for United Nations global activities. (A conference paper on this strategic reflection was circulated at the Commission session in May 2000.) The second area relates to the ways and means to improve communication, staff development, the working environment and administrative processes within the ECE secretariat.

ESCAP

220. Pursuant to the mandate by the Commission at its fifty-fifth session, the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR) reconvened its Open-ended Informal Working Group, from June 1999 to March 2000, to assist the work of ACPR in addressing the areas of concern requiring immediate action within the context of the ongoing reform of ESCAP. The work of the Working Group focused on (a) strengthening the implementation of mandates and effectiveness of related activities; (b) improving the process of review of the activities of ESCAP; (c) improving the visibility of the work and activities of the Commission; and (d) strengthening cooperation with other United Nations bodies and entities.

221. The Working Group identified a set of proposals for further action pertaining to those four areas, including: the need to ensure that activities in the programme of work should be related to specific mandates that have continuing relevance, add value and avoid duplicating efforts while strengthening collaboration with them; active involvement of member and associate member Governments in consideration and reprioritization of mandated activities; active assistance by member and associate member Governments in setting criteria and providing feedback for the assessment and evaluation of activities; optimizing the use of the ESCAP web page in demonstrating the visibility of its work; and enhancing the effectiveness of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) and its subcommittees.

ECLAC

222. At the end of 1998, a meeting of the open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group established pursuant to resolution 553 (XXVI)[22] undertook the priority-setting exercise for the programme of work that is currently under execution. The outcome of that meeting was a generalized increase in priorities for all categories of outputs of the ECLAC regular programme of work for the biennium 2000-2001.

223. Since then, another such meeting of the Group took place at the United Nations Headquarters in July 1999, to provide strategic guidance to the Commission in the context of the reform process of the United Nations system. That meeting also served as the opportunity for Latin American and Caribbean Governments to thoroughly review the work of the Commission in such designated high-priority areas as go beyond the formal boundaries of the regular programme of work such as the environment, natural disasters, finance for development and the regional follow-up to global conferences. Most of these activities are either partially financed with extrabudgetary resources or financed through the reallocation of existing regular resources while the overall financial scenario for the Commission shrinks over time.

224. At its XXVII session, the Commission requested the Ad Hoc Working Group to continue collaborating with the Executive Secretary in determining priority areas of the programme of work and in the debate and analysis of strategic directions for future activities of the Commission, bearing in mind the development priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean.[23]

ECA

225. ECA undertook a number of initiatives during the past year to achieve greater programme focus and enhance its effectiveness and operational efficiency. These measures, which are an integral part of deepening the reforms at ECA, with a view to improving the quality and impact of its work, have encompassed both substantive and administrative reform dimensions. Among the substantive initiatives were the launching of the African Development Forum (ADF) series and the Mano River Basin Initiative.

226. The main administrative reforms at the secretariat have centred on the consolidation of programme support divisions of the secretariat, with the number of programme support divisions reduced from three to two. This reflected the recognition that significant efficiencies could be gained in terms of bringing together related management functions for enhanced interface and synergy. Thus, an Office for Planning and Resource Management has been created which will bring together the related functions of policy coordination, programme development and monitoring, budget and finance, human resource management, technical assistance coordination and evaluation. The Office will plan, develop, direct and administer new policies, strategies and procedures for leveraging overall organizational performance and enhancing management accountability.

227. The Conference and General Services Division (CGSD) will be responsible for the Conference and Translation Services, the General Services Section (GSS), the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), the Building Management Unit (BMU), the Security and Safety Unit and the Security Plan Office. In addition, the Information Services Section (ISS) will now be part of CGSD. The Division will continue to develop a more efficient, cost-effective and responsive conference planning and management service; enhance timeliness and quality in the support services in general and in procurement, relating to shipping, travel and protocol in particular; develop a service-minded, well-trained and well-equipped Security and Safety Unit; create an efficient and well-maintained work environment; and enable each staff member to have access to adequate information technology capabilities.

ESCWA

228. ESCWA had launched substantive reform initiative as early as 1994 and had concluded this aspect in 1997. However, the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to ensure further complementarity between normative and operational activities came into effect in 1999, by merging the former Technical Cooperation Division and the Programme Planning and Coordination Unit into one division, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division.

229. Additional measures in 1999 for furthering the effectiveness and efficiency of the Commission

focused on human resources development through upgrading staff skills, particularly in computer literacy; the adoption of the integrated management information system (IMIS) for improved management in the areas of personnel, finance, procurement and travel; the establishment of the United Nations House in Beirut, which now houses five other United Nations agencies, including the consequent savings accrued from the provision of common services and cost-sharing; and improvement of information technology and communication through the upgrading of computer hardware, expanding software applications, upgrading communication capacities and launching a project on the year 2000 computer problem (Y2K).

V. Report of the Executive Secretaries

230. The Executive Secretaries of the five Regional Commissions met on 19 and 20 July 1999, 29 and 30 September 1999, 13 and 14 February 2000 and 10 and 11 May 2000, in conjunction with meetings of the Economic and Social Council, and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, and the tenth session of UNCTAD. At those four meetings, the Executive Secretaries exchanged views on development issues, as they related to their respective regions, that warranted cooperation among the regional commissions and with other relevant partners within and outside the United Nations system.

231. The Executive Secretaries considered that the recent phase of financial turmoil had generated a deep sense in favour of fundamental reforms in the international financial architecture to improve the management of financial crises, as well as to prevent other recurrence of similar crises in future. The crisis had, indeed, led to a recognition that there was an enormous discrepancy between the sophisticated and dynamic financial world and the institutions that regulated it, and that "existing institutions are inadequate to deal with financial globalization".[24] Accordingly, they welcomed General Assembly resolution 54/197, in which the Assembly stressed the need further to define the role and improve the capacities of the international, regional and subregional financial institutions with regard to the prevention, management and resolution in a timely and effective manner of international financial crises, encouraged efforts to enhance the stabilizing role of regional and subregional financial institutions and arrangements in supporting the management of monetary and financial issues, in accordance with the mandate of each institution, and requested the regional commissions to provide their views on this matter to the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session through their regular reports to the Economic and Social Council.

232. The fairly rapid though incomplete normalization of capital markets could give way to a sense of complacency that might slow down the reform effort and prevent seizing this opportunity to broaden its agenda and setting in motion a representative, balanced negotiation process. They felt therefore that the agenda should be broadened in at least two senses: first, it should go beyond the issues of financial crisis prevention and resolution (which might be termed the "narrow" financial architecture) to include those associated with development finance and the "ownership" of economic and, particularly, development policies; and, second, it should consider, in a systematic fashion, the role not only of world institutions, but also of regional arrangements and the areas where national autonomy should be maintained.

233. There are at least three arguments in support of a strong role for regional institutions in the new financial order. The first one is that globalization also entails open regionalism. The growth of intraregional trade and direct investment flows are, indeed, striking features of the ongoing globalization process. This factor increases macroeconomic linkages and thus the demands for certain services provided by the international financial system — macroeconomic surveillance and internalization of the externalities that national macroeconomic policies have on neighbouring countries, and mutual surveillance of each other's mechanisms for the prudential regulation and supervision of the financial system — and the regional effects of potential debt standstills and workout procedures.

234. Secondly, some of these services may be subject to diseconomies of scale and it is unclear whether others have the strong scale economies to justify single international institutions in specific areas. Traditional issues of subsidiarity are thus raised. For example, macroeconomic consultation and surveillance at the world level may be necessary to guarantee policy coherence among major industrialized countries, but it would certainly be inefficient to manage the externalities generated by macroeconomic policies on neighbours in the developing world (or even within

Europe). Owing to differences in legal traditions and the sheer scale of the diseconomies involved, surveillance of national systems for the prudential regulation and supervision of financial sectors, and even the definition of specific minimum standards in this area, may be dealt with more appropriately with the support of regional institutions. Development finance can operate effectively at different scales and can perform certain functions at regional and subregional levels that could not be performed at the international level. Also, although regional and international contagion implies that the management of the largest balance-of-payments crises should be assigned to a single world institution, it is unclear how far this assertion should be pushed. Strong regional institutions can serve as regional buffers, as the post-war Western European experience indicates. Regional reserve funds can also play a useful role in the developing world and, if expanded, could even provide full support to the small and medium-sized countries within some regions. Also, as the rising concentration of balance-of-payments support in a few countries indicates, the fact that there may be biases in the response of the international community according to the size of the country, would argue for a division of labour in the provision of services in this area between world and regional organizations.

235. The third argument is that, for smaller countries, the access to a broader menu of alternatives to manage a crisis or to finance development is relatively more important than the "global public goods" that the largest international organizations provide (for example, global macroeconomic stability) and upon which they will assume they have little or no influence (that is to say, they have the attitude of "free riders"). Owing to their small size, their negotiation power vis-à-vis large organizations would be very limited, and their most important defence is therefore competition in the provision to them of financial services from such institutions.

236. There may be a fourth, political economy argument: countries are likely to take quite different attitudes to the analyses made by international and regional organizations (and in the attached conditionality). They are probably more likely to "own" the latter, as they feel they have a stronger voice in the analyses made by regional organizations, a fact that will improve rather than reduce effectiveness. The fear that this may lead to lax arrangements is unwarranted, as the proposal to create and strengthen regional financial institutions entails financial commitments by developing countries to provide the capital for the corresponding reserve funds and development banks, a fact that will lead the countries to closely monitor the soundness of their activities. Indeed, the supply of capital will be the single most important restriction to the growth of these regional financial networks. The fact that many of these institutions will raise money in the market will provide an additional means of control over their operations.

237. The current discussion has underscored the fact that some services provided by international financial institutions, including some "global public goods", are being undersupplied. However, it would be wrong to conclude from this statement that the increasing supply should come from a few world organizations. Rather, the organizational structure should have, in some cases, the nature of networks of institutions that provide the services required on a complementary basis and should function, in others, as a system of competitive organizations. The provision of the services required for financial crisis prevention and management should be closer to the first model, whereas, in the realm of development finance, competition should be the basic rule (and, in fact, should include competition with private agents as well). However, purity in the model's structure is probably not the best characteristic: it is desirable that parts of networks compete against each other (for example, regional reserve funds versus the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the provision of emergency financing) and that competitive organizations cooperate in some cases.

238. This implies that IMF of the future should not be viewed as a single, global institution, but rather as the apex of a network of regional and subregional reserve funds. This model should be extended to the provision of macroeconomic consultation and surveillance, as well as to coordination and surveillance of national systems of prudential regulation and supervision complementing, rather than substituting for, regular IMF surveillance. It is important to emphasize that, aside from other functions, subregional development banks can play a significant role as a mechanism for pooling the risks of groups of developing countries, thus allowing them to make a more aggressive use of opportunities provided by private capital markets.

239. An institutional framework such as that suggested would have two positive features. First of all, it may

help to bring more stability to the world economy by providing essential services that can hardly be provided by a few international institutions, particularly in the face of a dynamic process of open regionalism. Secondly, from the point of view of the equilibrium of world relations, it would be more balanced than a system based on a few world organizations. This would increase the commitment of less powerful players to abide by rules that contribute to world and regional stability.

Globalization and regionalism

240. At their meeting in Bangkok on 13 and 14 February 2000, the Executive Secretaries considered the issue of globalization, regionalism and development, in response to the invitation of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD requesting their participation in an interactive debate with him on the subject at the tenth session of UNCTAD. The papers, which are to be published by UNCTAD, and the ensuing debate reflected an interest in linking global and regional approaches on complex issues, since convergences or divergences between regions help to better understand the phenomenon at stake. While there are significant disparities in the relative speed of regionalization and globalization, convergences are strong on the fact that globalization is not an obstacle as long as the conditions are met to make globalization an engine for the development of all countries. A summary overview below synthesizes some of the main findings around these issues.

241. With respect to regionalization and development, Europe and Latin America intraregional trade is more dynamic than trade with other regions. From this point of view, it could be said that we are witnessing more regionalization than globalization. In Europe the same is true for FDI (55 per cent of Western European FDI remains in Europe) and it is interesting to note that trade liberalization and stable monetary conditions in Latin America also contributed in recent years to intraregional investments, which, although modest in terms of volume (about 5 per cent of total of foreign investment flowing into the region), are significant given their dynamism and their contribution to regional integration. At the end of the 1990s, the Asian crisis and the deterioration of the economic situation in Japan slowed down the pace of Asian regional integration, which nevertheless is significant, with intra-Asian trade representing about 40 per cent of the total trade of the region. On the other side, in Africa and West Asia, intraregional trade declined in the past decade from an already very low level.

242. The reasons for these differences are to be found in the structure of exports and in the impact of subregional arrangements. They reflect well the nature of development in each region. Commodity exporting countries are dependent on the production and export of a few primary products whose share of world trade is declining and which are becoming increasingly less important in today's knowledge-based global economy. Since the majority of people are employed in the commodity producing sectors, poverty is perpetrated by the secular decline in the demand for these commodities. The energy exporting countries, while benefiting from a relatively less unfavourable evolution of prices, are also affected by their fluctuation and by the weak multiplier effect of commodity earnings on the rest of the national economy.

243. On the other side, the case of Western Europe illustrates well the rationale behind the dynamism of intraregional trade. In Europe, this trade is composed largely, and increasingly, of intra-industry rather than inter-industry exchanges. The explanation may well be that, as the extent of the market increases, economies of scale and of coordination allow the intermediate parts and processes required in the production of manufactured goods to be separated and entrusted to specialized producers. This dynamic division of labour could in principle be extended on a global basis, given the steep decline in coordination costs, but, in practice, it is likely to proceed more rapidly among countries with similar industrial structures, and geographically sufficiently close, to minimize the risks of disruption to their supplies of intermediate inputs. Therefore both geographical and economic distances matter. Subregional arrangements also contribute to reducing transaction costs as well as political risks. The success of EU and the arguments developed above help to explain the renewed dynamism of subregional integration in Latin America and in Asia. The question then arises whether or not regionalization is an obstacle to globalization.

244. There is considerable controversy in the literature whether the welfare gains from subregional arrangements are smaller or greater than those resulting from liberalization on a multilateral basis (most-favoured nation (MFN)) and whether they will

ultimately reinforce or undermine the multilateral trading system as embodied in the rules of the World Trade Organization. Estimates of whether such subregional arrangements lead to more intense trade with the rest of the world or to intra-bloc bias are inconclusive and sensitive to specification of models that embody a priori ideological assumptions. In the papers presented by the Executive Secretaries, it is interesting to note that, despite the unequal results of subregional arrangements and the adherence to World Trade Organization principles, all consider that official subregional arrangements are favourable to development, as they enlarge markets and expose enterprises to competition and therefore prepare countries to benefit from globalization. The most sophisticated presentation of this approach comes from Latin America which invented the expression of "open regionalism". This concept launched by ECLAC in 1994 is used to describe the trend that already existed at the end of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, when the dynamism of subregional movements was combined with unilateral liberalization and the movement towards hemispheric integration. Open regionalism is defined as interdependency between preferential agreements and "de facto" integration in response to market signals, resulting from a broad and generalized liberalization. As conceptualized by ECLAC, and as observed in practice, globalization and regionalism go hand in hand and are mutually reinforcing.

245. In conclusion, regionalism is the alpha and the omega of globalization: the liberalization that is at the heart of globalization leads to more intraregional trade and capital movement. Regionalism is perceived as a step towards preparing countries and enterprises to face the challenges and risks of globalization. Regionalism is also an alternative for countries that perceive unfairness and asymmetries in the globalization programme promoted by the more advanced developed countries.

Globalization and development

246. On globalization and development, the five Executive Secretaries agree on the technological and institutional evolutions that underpin globalization. There are nuances in their analysis as to what is actually new or not, ECE underscoring that at the end of the nineteenth century the invention of the telegraph together with the development of rail transports introduced changes in business operation that were as dramatic, if not more so, than the development of the Net. They are unanimous, however, in underlining the asymmetries in globalization and the risks this poses for development.

247. Globalization is a process facilitated by information technology and characterized by increasing shares of external trade in GDP and growing freedom of capital movements; but it can also be seen as a political programme promoted by the Governments of North America and Western Europe and by large multinational companies that, by giving as full a reign as possible to market forces and reducing the role of the State to a minimum, is expected to lead to faster growth for the world economy and also to increasing convergence of national incomes per head across the world. Seen as such, the globalization agenda turns out to be the traditional new liberal agenda updated for a world where geographical distance is alleged to have little significance for business. The dynamic of intra-European and North American trade shows, however, that in fact geography still matters.

248. The Governments of many developing countries, or countries with economies in transition, are ready to adhere to such a programme, but it becomes unacceptable to them as soon as they realize that liberalization over the last decade has tended to be one-sided and that, more and more, World Trade Organization regulations would prevent them from developing active policies to increase the competitiveness of their economies.

249. The Uruguay Round agreements[25] have indeed increased the transparency of national trade rules and have extended the scope of multilateral rules and disciplines. However, despite the efforts made by the developing countries, the outcome of the negotiations were extremely unbalanced in terms of the distribution of the costs and benefits. The concerns of the majority of countries with economies in transition were ignored as they were not members of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), but on many points they are similar to those of the developing countries. The Governments of those two country groups demand that tariff barriers to products in which they have comparative advantages should be reduced and that they should not be prevented from increasing their export capacity by importing countries using diverse types of trade restrictions and discriminatory measures

such as anti-dumping provisions and new modalities of voluntary export restraints. Finally, those Governments require that they not be banned from using policy tools for restructuring their economies and building new comparative advantages. Africa is particularly concerned by the insistence of EU on the renewal of the special safeguard provisions under the Agreement on Agriculture which it judges to operate against its development interests.

250. The succession of financial crises has led to a better recognition of the importance of financial regulation and the strict enforcement of prudential rules; it has also led to a better assessment of the risks of liberalizing short-term capital movements in countries that have not yet fully developed financial institutions and mechanisms and where the mobility of short-term capital can lead to excessively strict macroeconomic policies to the detriment of growth and restructuring. It has led also to discussions on the reform of the international financial architecture, in which the regional dimension would need to be taken into account.

Other issues and proposals for consideration by the Council

251. The Executive Secretaries also discussed the relationship between the regional commissions and the Economic and Social Council and considered ways to strengthen their contributions to the Council's policy review. In that connection, they expressed their genuine satisfaction with the modalities recently put in place for interlinking the activities of the commissions with other United Nations entities at the global level and with the United Nations system at the regional level, in line with the guidance provided by the Council in its resolution 1998/46, annex III, in respect of the dual role of the commissions.

252. At the global intergovernmental level, however, the Executive Secretaries felt that there was additional scope for substantive interaction between the regional commissions and the Economic and Social Council. In the view of the Executive Secretaries, this could be accomplished by:

- Making the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation more focused on policy issues as they arise at the regional level, including intergovernmental perspectives of the commissions on these and related issues. Instead of covering the recurrent activities, the report would concentrate primarily on new developments and significant initiatives, undertaken by the respective commissions. In addition, the report would continue to highlight in an analytical manner the response of the commissions to the global mandates, such as, the follow-up to the global conferences and other major issues of which the United Nations is seized. At the same time, the report would continue to update the Economic and Social Council on developments in interregional cooperation as well as on progress made in inter-agency cooperation at the regional level in response to regional priorities. The Council's attention would also be drawn to any significant initiatives undertaken with their respective regional partners;
- Providing the summaries of the regional economic and social surveys prepared by the commissions so that they might bear on the debate on the global economic situation, at the beginning of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

Notes

[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.II.C.1.

[2] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.II.F.10.

[3] General Assembly resolution 46/151, annex, sect. II.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4.

[5] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[6] See *Report of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Paris, 3-14 September 1990* (A/CONF.147/18), part one.

[7] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.II.E.3.

[8] Ibid., chap. I.

[9] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 19* (E/1999/39), chap. IV.

[10] Ibid., *Supplement No. 21* (E/1999/41), chap. I.

[11] Ibid., decision 220 (XX), annex.

[12] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[13] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[14] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.II.E.24.

[15] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[16] See "Third African Population Conference", in *Population Bulletin of the United Nations, 1994*, Nos. 37/38 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XIII.16), pp. 37-46.

[17] See United Nations Environment Programme, *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

[18] A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex I.

[19] FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1, decision 1/CP.3, annex.

[20] General Assembly resolution S-21/2, annex.

[21] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

[22] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 17* (E/1996/37), chap. III, sect. F.

[23] Ibid., *1998, Supplement No. 21* (E/1998/41), chap. III, sect. G, resolution 565 (XXVII).

[24] Report of the Task Force of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, entitled "Towards a new international financial architecture", 21 January 1999.

[25] See *Legal Instruments Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, done at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994* (GATT secretariat publication, Sales No. GATT/1994-7).